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SPECULATIVE ESSAYS ON NEOLIBERALISM IN EDUCATION: DREAMS OF RESISTANCE AND ACTION FOR A MORE SOCIALLY JUST FUTURE

Lindsey Crumley

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Under the Direction of John Weaver

ABSTRACT

The way in which teachers are educated has wide reaching impacts on the ways students in their classrooms are educated. When test scores are regarded as the sole marker of a good teacher, then critical pedagogies and theories are left out of teacher education spaces. This dissertation aims to discuss a multitude of issues, both structural and day-to-day, that plague both education as a whole and teacher education specifically. Additionally, this dissertation aims to show ways in which communities, teacher educators, students, and schools are acting in resistance to the forms of control seen in education. This dissertation will use speculative essays and speculative fiction as a way to explore many structures of power and control that impact schools, teachers, and teacher education. These essays demonstrate the compounding control that teachers and their students experience daily in schools and society as a whole. They also inform the reader of a variety of critical pedagogies that can be implemented as forms of resistance to various structures of control such as neoliberalism, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and heteronormativity. This dissertation indicates a need for a reconceptualization of both teacher education specifically and education in general as a way for these spaces to become more socially just in the future. This dissertation and its findings should inspire further acts of resistance in the future and current teachers who read it.

INDEX WORDS: neoliberalism, racism, sexism, classism, teacher education, speculative essays, resistance, critical pedagogies, critical theories

NAMING SUFFERING TO OVERCOME IT: ESSAYS ON NEOLIBERALISM IN

EDUCATION AND DREAMS FOR A MORE SOCIALLY JUST FUTURE

By

LINDSEY CRUMLEY

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LINDSEY CRUMLEY

Major Professor:	John Weaver
Committee:	Ming Fang He
	Delores D. Liston
	Julie Gorlewski
	Wayne Au

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

MY EVER-CONTINUING JOURNEY IN EDUCATION

I've known since a very young age that I want to be an educator. Some people are born knowing what they want to be when they "grow up", and I was always that person. The process I would go through to become an educator was known from the start as well. I knew I would graduate high school, then I would graduate college, and then begin teaching. I was able to do all of those things, but in the process, I grew a passion for learning and higher education as well. After a few years in the classroom, I then went on to complete a Master's degree. A few years later, the next step clearly seemed to be an Ed.D. program. Unlike the other programs I have gone through in the past, the Curriculum Studies program at Georgia Southern has been life changing in my academic, professional, and personal life. Through the process of this program, I have learned about both routine issues and structural issues in education that were seemingly never discussed in my previous teacher education experiences. Some of the issues that I have discovered in my research throughout this program will become the chapters of these speculative essays (Schubert, 1991) dissertation. Those issues are the manufactured crisis of education through high stakes tests and standardization (Au, 2009; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Kumashiro, 2012), the variety of routes to teacher certification (Kumashiro, 2009; Romanowski & Alkhateeb, 2020; Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019), classroom and education practices that de-skill teacher work and teacher knowledge (Apple, 1995; Au, 2011; Giroux, 2016; Gorlewski, 2013; Saltman, 2013), neoliberal multiculturalism in higher education and teacher education that leads to superficial understanding of and a devaluing of diversity and multicultural education (Banks, 2014; Darder, 2012; Mayorga & Picower, 2018; Melamed, 2006), and commodification of public, teacher, and higher education as well as the commodification of knowledge in general

(Giroux, 2019; Saltman & Means; 2015). Gaining an understanding of these issues, and how they do not occur in a vacuum of schools, but are also tied to structural realities of neoliberalism and the intersection of racism, sexism, and classism in our society has shaped this dissertation work.

When I think back on this program as a whole in comparison to my previous teacher education experiences, I have this image of myself in the woods. When I entered the woods, or my career in education, I felt lost and scared, but I was also confident that my teacher education programs had prepared me to be competent in the classroom. I was able to use the tools my educational experience had given me to make my own path in the classroom. During my Master's program, with its focus on so-called *best practices,* I felt like I gained even more tools to make my way in the field of education. I truly felt like I was finding my way and place as an educator in the classroom. When I entered the Curriculum Studies program at Georgia Southern, I was confident that my toolbox for making my own path in education would be even further expanded. While this became true over time, it did not start out like that. At the beginning of this program, I felt like my previous box of tools was ripped away, and I often felt like I was back in the heavy part of the woods without anything to help me get through it. I quickly learned that the so-called best practices are too often the center of focus in teacher education programs and not all that a good educator needs in order to navigate the thick woods of education. Educators also need a critical understanding of the structural realities of all of the -isms that impact our schools, communities, and society as a whole (Au, 2009; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 1994; Tuck & Yang, 2018).

As a white woman from a middle-class home that valued meritocracy, I had always believed that schools were places where anyone can be anything they want so long as they work

hard. Through this program, I have learned that the structural realities of neoliberalism, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heteronormativity, and more do not stop at the walls of a school building and too often thwart the goal of meritocracy. I spent a lot of time at the beginning of this program learning how my previous toolbox of best practices that may have been helping to guide my own practice as an educator may have also been further marginalizing the students in my classroom. At the beginning of the program when I felt most abandoned by my previous educational experiences, I would ask myself questions like: could each of my previous teacher education experiences really be this wrong? How is it that I have gone a decade into my teaching career without understanding the role that structural issues in society play in schools? These are the questions that I still ask myself to this day, and it is a big reason behind this dissertation work, which is the ways in which neoliberalism as an ideology impacts teachers and teacher education. In this dissertation, I explore the history of ways in which neoliberalism has further embedded structural racism, sexism, classism, and the other -isms into schools and society, how these impact teacher education's ability to be critical in its course work about these structural realities, and show ways that teachers, their students, parents, and communities, as well as teacher educators are resisting neoliberalism, racism, sexism, and classism in schools and teacher education programs. My hope is that future teachers like myself may read this work and be encouraged to begin their own path as a critical educator.

Unlearning the teaching practices that my previous teacher education experiences prepared me to use has been difficult, ongoing, and necessary. While I feel I have been able to unlearn a lot of the neoliberal lies that my previous institutions and experiences had instilled in me, my frustrations that they were ingrained into my teacher education programs to begin with is still very much here. My previous teacher education experiences were not critical of issues

around race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability biases in schools, communities, and society. My

frustration about the past, and desire for a more socially just future of teacher education,

education, and the field of curriculum studies is why I feel this dissertation work is significant.

There is a need for talking back (hooks, 1989/2015) against the structures, voices in power, and

existing conditions that both create and perpetuate marginalization and oppression through

schooling. From entering this program and seeing that my previous teacher education

experiences were not preparing teachers like myself to be critical of systemic racism, sexism,

classism, ableism, and all of the other -isms that permeate society and schools, I think it is

imperative that teacher education be reconceptualized toward critical pedagogies and a variety of

critical theories that create educators who are able to critique a multitude of issues in their

schools, communities, and society as a whole. I believe this is especially important for white

female educators because we continue to make up the majority of teachers in public school

classrooms (NCES, 2018). There are many teacher educators already trying to do this work, but

it will need to be collaborative involving the voices of future educators, current educators, as

well as parents and community members in which these future and current teachers serve. Each

should play a role in this reconceptualization process. Going nearly a decade of my teaching

career without thinking and acting critically around structural issues that create an

intersectionality of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991) is a tremendous part of why I want to write this

speculative essay (Schubert, 1991) dissertation around the impacts of neoliberalism on teachers

and teacher education. My vision for what this reconceptualization may look like is further

explicated in the concluding chapter of this dissertation, where I lay out my utopian vision of

what a post neoliberal teacher education and education system in the United States could look

like.

In the process of this program, I have been able to create a new toolbox that has helped guide my now critical education journey that empowers and transforms, rather than further marginalizes the students and communities that I work in and with. This new toolbox, I have come to know and use, is the theoretical framework that I will use in this dissertation. I call this framework critical theory with a critique of neoliberalism, and it is further explicated in the opening chapter of this dissertation. The way that I have created my new toolbox is through reading the work of other scholars who have helped me to shape my understanding of neoliberalism and its impacts on education, including the works of Brown (2015; 2019), hooks (1989/2015), Au (2009/2023; 2018), Giroux (1988; 2019), Saltman (2013), Lipman (2011), and Kumashiro (2002; 2012). Each of these works, and scholars have guided me towards new and deeper understanding of neoliberalism, as well as guided my ability to shed light on the structural issues of racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and heteronormativity that are permeating throughout the fields of education and curriculum studies. Each scholar has demonstrated that through the power of essays, writing, and the use of your own voice, anyone can add to the field of curriculum studies. These works influence how I want to contribute to the field with this dissertation work.

Many of these scholars use their writing as voices of critique against neoliberalism, and speculative essays (Illich, 1983; Schubert, 1991; Schalk, 2018) as a form of curriculum inquiry allows me to do that as well. The work of influential scholars who use speculative essays demonstrates to me its validity as a form of curriculum inquiry for myself to use as well. Each of the scholars mentioned, and many more, have changed my worldview, shaped my theoretical framework, and have helped me to navigate the dense woods of education in new, more empowering and transformative ways. The use of critical theories that specifically critique

neoliberalism and speculative essays in a way that may help another future educator find their way toward beginning a critical education journey, like I have been able to, is relevant and needed in the field of curriculum studies. hooks (1989/2015) writes "[i]n fiction as well as in confessional writing, those who understand the power of voice as gesture of rebellion and resistance urge the exploited, the oppressed to speak" (p. 14). Educators are exploited by neoliberalism that overcomes their daily lives in schools and society. It is imperative that those who are on the continuous journey of becoming a critical and empowering educator are able to empower and guide others toward becoming critical along the way as well. Just as critical educators continuously strive to remind ourselves; we should also continuously strive to teach others of the goals of more socially just pedagogies as well.

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory with a Critique of Neoliberalism</div>

As mentioned, the theoretical framework of critical theory with a specific critique of neoliberalism has become the lens through which I am able to view and critique both the world around me, and specifically teacher education and schools. Although this theoretical framework may be new to me as a way to critique education and society, critical theory has a long history of critique. Scholars have been using the tools of critique, dialogue, and praxis, that are the key tenets of critical theory, well before those tools became a part of my own repertoire. While the history of critical theory may be vast, it has not come without its own critics. I believe many of the critics of critical theory are not wrong in their critique, but have actually further sharpened the tools of the past, and have allowed for a more empowering future when using a variety of critical theories. In this section I discuss some of the many voices in the storied history of critical theory and critique of neoliberalism, demonstrating how each movement of critical theory

scholars has further sharpened the tools of critique, dialogue, and praxis that are integral parts of the critical theory framework.

The First Tools: Shaped by the Frankfurt School

The first tools of critical theory were shaped by the work of scholars at the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, or more commonly known, the Frankfurt School. Scholars such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Jürgen Habermas shaped the school and the beginnings of the field of critical theory. Drawing on the work of philosopher Karl Marx with his critique of bourgeois society and Sigmund Freud's work in psychoanalysis, the scholars of the Frankfurt school critiqued society and human nature. Much of their focus was on critiquing social class oppression, fascism, and the power of media and science. In their critique, they also developed the beginning of the tools of dialogue and praxis, which are key components of critical theory as a theoretical framework.

One of the major works of the Frankfurt School scholars was *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947/1972/2002). Written by Horkheimer and Adorno, the work was originally published in German in 1947 although the scholars had moved to the United States at the time to escape the Nazi regime in Europe in the 1930s. It was later translated into English in 1972. In this work, Horkheimer, Adorno, and translator Cummings (1947/1972/2002) discuss what they believe to be the failings of the age of enlightenment writing "[f]or the Enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion" (p. 4). Although originally written nearly 70 years ago, this failing is still noted by scholars today who argue that education, and teaching, is reduced to numbers (Au, 2009; Taubman, 2009). Jay (1996) investigates the history of critical theory and the early works of the Frankfurt School and its scholars. He finds that the scholars, while critiquing quantitative reductionism, still have a connection to the natural

sciences and use reason as a key tenet in many of their arguments and research. Jay (1996) writes "[t]hroughout its history, the Institut[e] carried on a spirited defense of reason" (p. 71). This means that while the Frankfurt School scholars did use reason and incorporate the natural sciences into their research, they also warned against and critiqued quantitative reductionism. Reductionism here refers to the over reliance on the quantitative nature of the natural sciences, or the belief that the natural sciences would be the holders of absolute truth and be the fixer of all things. This is a significant aspect of the work of the early Frankfurt school scholars because the use of numbers is not always necessarily bad, but relying on them to tell you everything you need to know, especially when it relates to students and teachers in schools can be detrimental. Taking their early critique of the reduction of human experience into numbers is a significant factor for why critical theory as a theoretical framework is significant to my own understanding of the world, because I believe that much of schooling today over-relies on numbers, *facts*, and data rather than placing an emphasis on understanding students, teachers, and parents within the contexts of their intersectionality of oppressions.

Another reason that I believe the Frankfurt school and its scholars are important to discuss here is because they also critiqued capitalism and the media. Adorno, Horkheimer, and Cummings (1947/1972/2002) called the media the *culture industry*. Their critique was based in the ways that the media, as an industry in the capitalist system, was able to profit off of the reproduction of society. Jürgen Habermas wrote this in his critique of capitalism, as published in Ingram and Simon-Ingram (1991), "[c]apitalism is defined by a mode of production that not only poses this problem but also solves it" (p. 127). Habermas' critique of capitalism here is that it is self-sustaining and will continue to present problems as a way to continue to provide solutions. In education, the same can be seen today with the ways in which markets and corporate interests

create problems through high-stakes tests as a way to provide solutions. These ideas of critiquing capitalism for its role in self-perpetuating issues will be explicated in many of the essays of this dissertation. Many of these essays will demonstrate how the early Frankfurt school scholars were correct in their critique of capitalist systems that both create and perpetuate inequalities.

Along with critique, another significant tenet of critical theory that was discussed by the early scholars of the Frankfurt school was an emphasis on praxis. Max Horkheimer was the leader of the institute beginning in 1931, and strongly argued for the integration of theory with praxis in his inaugural address as leader (Held, 1980, p. 32). The scholars at the school believed that praxis, or the integration of theory into practice, was important for the critique of and abolishment of systems of oppression, or for these scholars, the systems of capitalism. For these scholars, praxis was their way of proving the theories and critiques they were making. Held (1980) writes that these scholars believed "theory is tested and verified in and through practice" (p. 190). Their critique of the capitalist system was only further proved as their work was put into practice.

Herbert Marcuse was a scholar at the school who strongly advocated for the merging of theory with practice, or the key tenet of critical theory known as praxis. Parts of his work are published by Ingram and Simon-Ingram (1991), where he writes that critical theory "is at one with philosophy in maintaining that man can be more than a manipulable subject in the production process of class society" (p. 16). This demonstrates the awareness of changes that can be made when theory is able to be put into praxis. In another of his works, Marcuse writes about the role that theory and practice play together stating "theory which has not caught up with the practice of capitalism cannot possibly guide the practice aiming at the abolition of capitalism" (Marcuse, 1972, p. 34). Theory must go hand in hand with practice if systems of oppression are

to be understood, addressed, and abolished. Critique and praxis were the first tools created for critical theory by the early critical theorist, and these tools were used and further sharpened by the next group of scholars to advance this field and theoretical framework.

Sharpening the Tools: Reproduction, Resistance, and Empowerment

As previously mentioned, the scholars of the Frankfurt School did not continue to stay in Germany at the Institute. Rensmann (2017) argues that Horkheimer as the director "intensely discussed the nature and scope of the Nazi movement and perceptively decided years before the Nazis actually took power that it was time to prepare exile and escape from Germany" (p. 14). The scholars did so, and relocated throughout the world to continue their work. With their forced move, the work of the early scholars of critical theory was taken and used in many places around the world. It was able to demonstrate the myriad of ways in which the capitalist structure was reproducing society for its own needs beyond the context of Europe. Although their work became a basis for a widely used critique, it did not come without critics. One of the earliest critics of critical theory was Foucault (1982). He argued that power relations were more varied than simply social class power. He also wrote about how power was not limited to people, but was institutionalized by the powerful to continue perpetuating the multiplicity of imbalances of power. Foucault (1982) writes "[p]ower exists only when it is put into action, even if, of course, it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures" (p. 788). Foucault (1975) discussed the prison system as one such institution that perpetuates imbalances of power in society. Foucault's critique of critical theory as not going far enough to discuss the institutions that perpetuate capitalistic goals, gave way for future critical theorists to begin to do that. As a result of this critique, schools began to become one of the institutions of power that was also looked at for the ways in which it produces, reproduces, and perpetuates

inequalities. Scholars began and continue to note the ways in which education and schooling works to reproduce social class and other inequalities.

Anyon (1980) is one such scholar who critiqued the institution of schooling as a tool for capitalist reproduction. She took the tools of critique and praxis as laid out by the early Frankfurt Scholars, and used them to investigate institutions of power, one such institution being schools. Anyon's (1980) research on the hidden curriculum of schools directly demonstrates the ways in which students are educated to reproduce their role in a capitalist society. Anyon's (1980) research was conducted on five elementary schools, and she found that the school's curriculum, and the way the teachers taught students varied greatly based on the social class of the students in the schools. She writes "[t]hese differences may not only contribute to the development in the children in each social class of certain types of economically significant relationships and not others, but would thereby help to reproduce this system" (Anyon, 1980, p. 90). Her research demonstrates specific ways in which schooling as an institution within a capitalist system can be used as a form of reproduction of existing inequalities in society.

Taking the tools of critique and praxis further again were scholars who used critical theory to go beyond simply recognizing the reproduction of schools, but also resisting such reproduction. The field of critical theory that used resistance included scholars such as Paul Willis (1977). His work with *the lads* was very influential to the work of resisting the reproductive nature of schools, because it demonstrated the ways in which students, specifically working-class male students, in England were resisting the hidden curriculum of social class in their school. Dolby, Dimitriadis, and Willis (2004) updated the work to include voices of race, gender, and other identities as well. Another group of scholars who put the tool of praxis into action were those who began using critical theory as a form of resistance by implementing

critical pedagogy in their classrooms. Critical pedagogy began to rise in popularity in the 1970s and 1980s as scholars such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren began writing about the ways in which schools could become sites of resistance to the hidden curriculum of social class. Freire (1970) brought forth the idea of traditional schooling as a banking-model, and instead argued for problem-posing education as a form of praxis for critical education in the classroom. Freire's (1970) idea began to sharpen the tool of dialogue for critical theory praxis. He writes that through problem posing education "[t]he teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students… they become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire, 1970, p. 73). Dialogue in this way became a new tool used by critical theorists that could be used in practice as a way toward liberation of marginalized groups.

Two other scholars who discussed critical pedagogy at length, as well as placed an emphasis on dialogue as a tool for critical theory were Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren. Both of these scholars also write extensively about the ways in which neoliberalism has come to impact education. This is a different critique of traditional capitalism than was offered by the earlier critical theorists. In his writing around critical pedagogy, Giroux (1988) writes about the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals. He argues that because schools are institutions of power struggle, it is important for those working in the school to "address issues concerning the wider functions of schooling" (Giroux, 1988, Lo. 441). Giroux (1988) argues that when teachers are able to understand their role in reproduction, and begin to be critical of that role, it can be a way to transform the space of schools into an empowering place for both teachers and students. Giroux and McLaren (1989) together compile a collection of essays around critical pedagogy, and how the public education system in the United States has become a business. The essays

provoke questions around the hidden curriculum of schools, whose knowledge is being taught, and whose is being silenced. They argue for "schools as sites of struggle and for pedagogy as a form of cultural politics" (Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p. 237). McLaren (1989) also adds to the growing work around critical pedagogy during the late 1980s. McLaren (1989) discusses the work of teachers on a daily basis and shares his own journey in becoming a critical educator through what he calls revolutionary praxis.

The work of Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren at the end of the 1980s demonstrates a growing conversation in the field of curriculum studies at this time toward critical pedagogy, questioning the role of the state in public education, and the role that teachers can play in creating spaces of critique against the reproductive nature of schooling within their classrooms. Apple (1995) also writes about the role of the state in education, and particularly education's role in upholding hegemony, or when one group of people has domination over another group. Apple (1995) writes about the state's actions in upholding hegemony when he says the state will "actively intervene to guarantee the production of particular kinds of cultural commodities (here technical knowledge) by sponsoring sanctions, programs, institutions, and people" (p. 55). Because of the school's connection to and being an extension of the state, it is important for teachers and communities to understand that schools play an active role in creating and sustaining hegemony. Apple (1995) writes "[a]s a part of the state, education, then, must be seen as an important element in attempting to create such an active consensus" (p. 26). While the active consensus here is a way in which the state creates widespread consent for hegemony, I believe the active consensus could be transformed away from domination toward social justice through teachers who understand this connection between the state, education, and systemic oppression.

One other scholar who shaped the tool of dialogue during this time in the history of critical theory was Maxine Greene. Although she would not consider herself a critical pedagogy scholar and instead emphasized the role that the arts and aesthetic education could play in the larger scheme of education, she still wrote a lot about the role that oppression plays in education. Greene (1988) discussed the importance of naming the oppressions one encounters as a way to resist them. She writes this of the people of France during the French revolution, and their ability to create human action "*naming* the atrocities and the repression as obstacles to their shared existential undertaking, they focused attention on them as factors to be resisted, to be fought, perhaps to overcome" (Greene, 1988, p. 15). She truly believed in the power of education and dialogue as a way to empower and liberate people towards freedom. Critical pedagogy scholars such as those discussed in this section, although they are in no way an exhaustive list, sharpened the tools of the early critical theorists. Their work at this time is significant because it opened the doors for schools to become places where critical conversations around oppression could be had, and be used as a form of resistance against the reproduction of power imbalances. Although these scholars were able to sharpen the tools of critique, praxis, and dialogue that were paramount for reproduction and resistance, their belief that these things alone would create empowerment for a variety of marginalized groups did not come without critics.

Reimagining the Tools for Greater Accessibility: Who is this Really Empowering for?

The scholars who used critical pedagogy in schools were met with many critics, many of whom were women and women of color. While these women believed that the work of the critical theorists was important, they also believed that it may not be as empowering as they thought. Their critique pushed the work of the mostly male dominated field of critical theory and critical pedagogy, so that it would no longer leave out conversations on race and gender. Fraser

(1985) argued that critical theory left out voices of women by discussing the ways in which a critique of capitalism in a patriarchal society, in which women are less likely to participate in the market as often as men, leaves out a conversation about the ways in which the capitalist system also oppresses women. Fraser (1985) discusses unpaid care work that is too often a burden placed on women because this work does not allow women to be a part of the capitalist system that the traditional critical theorists were critiquing. Care work as it will be used in this dissertation refers to both paid and unpaid work that involves the care of others. That work may include a variety of things that aren't limited to teaching children or caring for the elderly or other adults and people who are unable to care for themselves. Fraser (1985) offers a socialist-feminist version of critical theory writing "a gender-sensitive reading of these connections has some important theoretical and conceptual implications. It reveals that male dominance is intrinsic rather than accidental to classical capitalism" (Fraser, 1985, p. 117). Another feminist scholar who critiqued the work of the earlier critical theorists is Benhabib (1985; 1992). She uses the research of Gilligan (1982) to critique these scholars, specifically Habermas for using a generalized other. She argues that "the generalized other requires us to view each and every individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would want to ascribe to ourselves" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 163). By relying simply on the generalized other standpoint, it leaves out the concrete realities of oppression. Benhabib's (1985) argument is that the utopian future that is relied on by the earlier critical scholars cannot be a truly liberating future without a discussion of gender. Both Gilligan (1982) and Benhabib (1985; 1992) argue for an intersection of the two writing "a definition of the self that is restricted to the standpoint of the generalized other becomes incoherent and cannot individuate among selves" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 157). There is a need for understanding that every individual is entitled to

rights, while also understanding the intersectionality of oppression that too often keeps people from these rights. These feminist scholars demonstrate the ways in which leaving out conversations around gender issues by the early critical scholars was a mistake, and diminished their argument for liberation. By adding these voices, and critique, feminist scholars were able to begin to reimagine the tools of the early critical work of a male dominated critical theory field.

Other feminist scholars who critiqued the work of critical theory, more specifically critical pedagogy, believed that these scholars left out both gender and race in their work and critiques of schools and society. hooks (1989/2015) and Ellsworth (1989) were two of those voices of critique that helped to reimagine the tools shaped by the critical pedagogy scholars to be more empowering for all. Critiquing critical pedagogy, hooks (1989/2015) and Ellsworth (1989) argued that the conversations around race and gender issues were too often left on the burden of the marginalized to explain their oppression. hooks (1989/2015) discusses the intersectionality of race, gender, and class. She argues for a need of Black women's voices to be trusted, learned from, and most importantly learned about. With critical pedagogies emphasis on dialogue, she argued that the burden of learning about the experiences of racism, sexism, and classism was placed on the oppressed person to discuss. Ellsworth (1989) draws on hooks' (1989/2015) work to push back on critical pedagogy scholars for not being better at naming what they want to be critical of. She also argues that critical pedagogy can tend to be more about understanding systems of oppression rather than transforming those systems of oppression. These two scholars are important for the history of critical theory, because they believe in reconceptualizing the tools of critique, dialogue, and praxis to go further than relying on the oppressed to tell about their oppressions. Another feminist critical theorist who discusses the need for adding conversations of gender and race when discussing the reproductive nature of

schooling is Weiler (1988). She writes "[b]y adding the categories of race and class to that of gender, we can begin to reveal the diversity and complexity of girls' and women's experiences in schools" (Weiler, 1988, lo. 665). Each of these feminist scholars demonstrates the importance of adding critique of gender, race, and class when using critical theory as a theoretical framework.

There is a need for scholars and educators to do their own work to understand systems of oppression, and to work towards transforming those systems. Some of that work needs to be done alone, through reading and learning, but along with their own scholarly learning, educators should also learn from the parents, students, and communities in which they teach. My hope is that this dissertation can act as a starting point for teachers who may be at the beginning of their critical education journey. In reading about my journey as a critical educator, my hope is that this leads others to read more, understand better, and begin fighting for more socially just practices and pedagogies within their own classrooms, schools, and communities. One way that I have tried to begin doing this in my own practice is by being more vocal about the role that scripted curriculum and testing plays in my district. I recently applied to be a part of a leadership team that will be analyzing the district's literacy instruction. However, I was not chosen, presumably because of the critical nature of my application. I also make it a point to talk back against deficit language that can be used when discussing students and parents, especially as it relates to overt racist and classist tones of the comments. Conversations where I used to remain silent, I now attempt to step in and assert that the comments are misguided.

Each of these feminist scholars discussed in this chapter have helped to reimagine the tools of critical theory used by the scholars before them to ensure that the tools could become more empowering. These scholars are significant to the field of critical theory as a whole and especially to my own use of critical theory as it can be used today because they demonstrate the

need for a variety of voices to be listened to, learned from, and learned about. There is a need to learn about the intersectionality of oppression and the systems that uphold them in order to be able to transform those systems. Intersectionality of oppression refers to the multitude of ways in which people can experience oppression, whether that be based on social class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. Being able to work towards transforming, or reconceptualizing, those systems of oppression is the ultimate reimagined tool of praxis. Seeing how the tools of critical theory came to be, were reshaped, and reconceptualized demonstrates why critical theory is still relevant today. The early tools of critique, dialogue, and praxis have become better suited for critique as a form of praxis that is still very much needed in education today.

Neoliberalism, and the Need for Another Sharpened Tool

Themes of critique against capitalism and neoliberalism have been noted throughout the outlining of the history of critical theory thus far in this chapter, however, I believe it is important to note more specifically the history of neoliberalism and the scholars who have, and are currently, critiquing it. As mentioned, the scholars of the Frankfurt School were early critics of classical capitalism. They were able to demonstrate and critique the ways in which capitalism as a structure would lead to a rise in reproduction of social class, and a rise of authoritarianism and fascism. Capitalism as an economic structure has since become more globalized and has taken on a new form in neoliberalism that goes beyond just the realm of economics. Chomsky (2011) writes about the ways in which globalization has allowed for the neoliberal ideology to spread beyond just the United States. He writes that globalization "is the result of powerful governments, especially that of the United States, pushing trade deals and other accords down the throats of the world's people to make it easier for corporations and the wealthy to dominate the economies of nations around the world without having obligations to the peoples of those

nations" (Chomsky, 2011, p. 13). Corporations and other private entities having all of the control with none of the responsibility is a major tenet of the neoliberal agenda. Another scholar who provides a historical analysis of neoliberalism and demonstrates how it has become a pervasive ideology not just in the United States, but globally as well is Harvey (2007). He explains how "neoliberalization was from the very beginning a project to achieve the restoration of class power" (Harvey, 2007, p. 16). Harvey (2007) is referring here to the ways in which neoliberalism has been able to restore power to conservatives, specifically conservatives in positions of power. Schools have been one such institution that have helped in the reinstating of traditional conservative power. Each level of government whether federal, state, and local have seen major shifts toward gaining and keeping the neoliberal ideology intact, and the role that schools have played in entrenching the neoliberal ideology into society will be further explicated throughout this dissertation. The ways in which neoliberalism has been and continues to be able to permeate all aspects of society has created the need for critique and resistance against this ideology.

The early critical theorists' critique of capitalism came with a German lens of how this economic structure was able to give rise to the authoritarianism and fascism of Hitler's Nazi Germany. These scholars were pushed out of Germany during this time period, relocated to Geneva, England, France, and later the United States. Post World War II, there were political, economic, and social movements in the United States that brought a new rise of neoliberalism in the capitalist economic structure. The work of John Maynard Keynes changed the conversation around the role that government can play in a nation's economy after World War II. Keynes (1935) argued that the government can take on a more active role in the economy. In an attempt to make sense of the Great Depression, Keynes theorized that the government could increase spending and lower interest rates as a means to try to avoid recessions. He also argued that

changing the amount of taxes collected could make an impact on the macroeconomic level. Following his work, Keynesian economics was popularized around the world.

Keynesian economics became dominant, but was critiqued by scholars such as Milton Friedman and Freidrich Hayek, who argued that market freedoms were more efficient than government intervention in the economy. Milton Friedman was part of the Chicago School of economics which popularized neoliberalism and laissez-faire markets. Van Horn and Mirowski (2009) write that the Chicago School was not limited to just the school of economics, but rather "subsequent 'Chicago Schools' of both economics and law were jointly incubated—one did not simply give rise to the other" (p. 151). While Milton Friedman was part of the Chicago School of economics, Freidrich Hayek was the leader of the Mont Pèlerin Society which integrated neoliberal economics with business leaders and corporations around the world. Mirowski and Plehwe (2009) write "[t]he Mont Pèlerin Society and related networks of neoliberal partisan think tanks can serve as a directory of organized neoliberalism" (p. 5). MacLean (2017) also writes of the beginning of the Mont Pèlerin Society, and its connection to neoliberalism. More specifically, she criticizes neoliberalism, the Mont Pèlerin Society, and its connections to the *Radical Right.* The Mont Pèlerin Society took neoliberal economics from the Chicago School and was able to spread these ideas rapidly through the networks of businesses and other leaders who were connected to the society. MacLean (2017) also discusses this group and adds that the society used racism as a way to push their narratives. At the conception of the society, its founding members grappled with how to indoctrinate neoliberal thought into society, specifically into democratic societies. Cornelissen (2017) writes about the initial members of the Mont Pèlerin Society, and how they discussed democracy, writing that "democracy posed an urgent problem for the neoliberal thought collective" (p. 508). For the founding members of the Mont

Pèlerin Society, democracy was a direct problem for neoliberalism because democracy ultimately disrupts the free market. With the core values of the society being the neoliberal ideology, and that ideology being in direct contrast with democracy, the members "felt that democracy could be saved by being restricted" (Cornelissen, 2017, p. 519). Their mission of ingraining neoliberalism into society while also chipping away at democracy continues today. While The Mont Pèlerin Society began in April of 1947 with just 39 members, today it has over 500 members from countries all over the world. The Chicago School of economics with its help from the Mont Pèlerin Society, and their rebuke of Keynesian economics, provided a framework for neoliberalism to take roots in the economic structure of both the United States, and the rest of the globe.

Neoliberalism has been on the rise since, and today seems so heavily ingrained into all aspects of society, as will be demonstrated in the essays in this dissertation. Its rise to power in the United States was initiated by a united economic, political, and social movement. Many of the scholars who critique this rise to power such as Brown (2015; 2019), Apple (2006), and Harvey (2007), and they are each significant in understanding the need to shape new tools that can be used to combat neoliberalism in all aspects of society, especially schools and teacher education programs. These scholars are important to note here because Brown (2015; 2019) writes about the history of neoliberalism, the ways in which neoliberalism is in itself inherently anti-democratic, and how neoliberalism encroaches on and degrades public spaces, specifically in regards to higher education. Apple (2006) writes about the various groups that have come together to ingrain neoliberalism into all spaces of society, and also discusses in much of his work what he calls the *struggle* for public education. Apple (2006) writes "[a]s one of the few remaining institutions that are still public, struggles over it are crucial" (p. 222). As it relates to

neoliberalism in public education, he argues that working towards a better future of public education should be the ultimate goal of critical educators. Finally, Harvey (2007) is an important scholar when discussing neoliberalism because of his ability to describe the history of neoliberalism and how it has come to shape every aspect of society. The work of each of these scholars demonstrates the need for a tool in critical theory that can specifically critique the neoliberal ideology because they each help to demonstrate the deeply coiled roots that neoliberalism has created and cemented into all aspects of society.

The neoliberal economic movement ushered in by the Chicago School of economics and the Mont Pèlerin Society, would not have been as successful without the political and social movements as well. The political movements that most helped to cement neoliberalism into society were the Reagan administration in the United States and Thatcher administration in the United Kingdom. MacLean (2017) writes of the "euphoria that swept the Mont Pèlerin Society after the elections of Ronald Reagan, and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom" (p. 174). Harvey (2007) also demonstrates the ways in which the political movements of Thatcher and Reagan were instrumental for the neoliberalism movement as a whole. He explains "[t]he Reagan administration then provided the requisite backing through further deregulation, tax cuts, budget cuts, and attacks on trade unions and professional power" (Harvey, 2007, p. 25). With Reagan ushering in this movement in the United States, Margaret Thatcher was doing the same in the United Kingdom. Since these administrations in the 1980s, the push for privatization of public goods and accountability on public goods while at the same time deregulating private institutions have only become further cemented into everyday society.

I believe that the social movement of neoliberalism may be the most important of the three, because in order for a movement to take root, it must first have support from the masses.

The Mont Pèlerin Society, and political leaders, needed the support of many in order for their neoliberal ideas to take hold and root itself more deeply. Much of the social movement of neoliberalism was spearheaded by the Republican Party and the Religious Right. MacLean (2017) and Brown (2019) both critique the Right's connection to neoliberalism with MacLean (2017) critiquing the Radical Right and Brown (2019)'s critique being the Religious Right. Brown (2019) writes, "[t]he contemporary attack on society and social justice in the name of market freedom and moral traditionalism is thus a direct emanation of neoliberal rationality, hardly limited to so-called 'conservatives'" (p. 13). She demonstrates here that neoliberalism is much larger than just "conservatives". Brown (2019) writes about the ways in which *conservative* ideals have become intertwined with the market. MacLean (2017) also discusses the ways in which neoliberalism intertwined itself with conservative reality when she writes about the fear that some neoliberals had about "moral deterioration in modern society" (p. 131). Both Brown (2019) and MacLean (2017) demonstrate how neoliberalism is broader than just conservatives by explicating ways that traditional conservative morality has been expanded to public spaces. Traditional conservative morality here refers to what the Religious Right considers moral. One example of this movement's success is discussed by Brown (2019). She writes about how the United States Supreme Court has come to be used as a way for "interpreting the First Amendment on behalf of broad deregulation, especially for corporate and religious interests" (Brown, 2019, p. 123). The paradox of the connection between the Religious Right and neoliberalism is their faith in the free market only when it benefits their ideals and morality. An example of this that Brown (2019) discusses is the United States Supreme Court decision of allowing private businesses to discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation. She writes about the case of a bakery being able to deny making a wedding cake for a same sex

couple. More recent examples include the overturning of Roe vs. Wade, and Engel vs Vitel which allows for prayer in schools. The Religious Right used the court system, or government intervention which they claim they hate, to prop up their own ideas of morality.

Others who discuss ways that neoliberalism goes beyond just conservatives are Apple (2006) and Harvey (2007) as they write about the *conservative alliance* that worked to further root neoliberalism into society. Apple (2006) writes that the conservative alliance includes "neoliberals, neoconservatives, authoritarian populists, and a particular fraction of the upwardly mobile professional and managerial new middle class" (p. 31). Each distinct group of the alliance played a specific role in the neoliberal social movement. Neoliberals are those who believe and trust in the free market. Neoconservatives are the part of the alliance that believes that the government should regulate culture. The authoritarian populists can also be referred to as the Christian right, and finally the managerial middle class are those who have benefitted from the standardization and accountability era (Apple, 2006). Another scholar who talks about how neoliberalism has become the norm in society is Mirowski (2014). He writes about what he called *everyday neoliberalism*, writing "[p]ower is not simply exercised between the ruler and the ruled; it has been integrated directly into the makeup of modern agency, it fills up the pores of our unremarkable day; it is the default option of our reflex assumptions about what other think and do" (Mirowksi, 2014, p. 99-100). Neoliberalism is deeply ingrained into the fabrics of our everyday society. Understanding the beginnings of the neoliberal movement, and how it is so ingrained into every part of our society is significant when creating tools to critique, and also to hopefully overcome, this ideology.

Much of the work around critiquing neoliberalism today concerns racialized neoliberalism (Lipman, 2011), colonizing neoliberalism (Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016), and

gendered neoliberalism (Brown, 2015). Each of these works demonstrate the ways in which neoliberalism exacerbates racism, sexism, and classism. For example, racialized neoliberalism as Lipman (2011) writes about it refers to "the relationship of education to federal policy to dismantle public housing, relocate tenants, and build market driven mixed-income developments with mixed-income schools" (p. 20). She argues that the policies that ultimately benefit the neoliberal ideology are also linked with systemic racism. She writes "[r]acsim is the ideological soil for appeals to individual responsibility" (Lipman, 2011, p. 12). Racism and neoliberalism are interconnected intentionally, and Lipman (2011) demonstrates the specific impacts of their connection when looking at the Chicago public school system. She discusses zoning laws, charter schools, and the disinvestment into public goods in the Chicago public school system. Looking at the African American communities, schools, neighborhoods in Chicago, she is able to show the connection between racism and neoliberalism. Tuck and Gorlewski (2016) discuss the ways in which neoliberalism acts as an extension of racist ordering and settler colonialism specifically within teacher education's use of programs such as edTPA. They write "[s]ettler colonialism is a network of structures, narratives, and justifications which promote the ascendancy of settler ontologies, especially of property and state violence against Indigenous peoples and Black peoples" (Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016, p. 212). Structures that uphold neoliberalism work in tandem to uphold racism and colonization as well. An example of gendered neoliberalism is given by Brown (2015), specifically as she discusses the role that unpaid care work plays in the lives of many women, and men who do not have to do this kind of labor as often as women. She writes "in the context of privatizing public goods uniquely penalizes women to the extent that they remain disproportionately responsible for those who cannot be responsible for themselves" (Brown, 2015, p. 105). Each of these different ways of

critiquing neoliberalism through different lenses is important to understanding the neoliberal ideology as a whole within today's context, especially as it relates to teacher education and schools.

The early critical theorists critiqued capitalism for what it may produce, and today's scholars are proving them right by showing the ways neoliberalism has continued to create, sustain, and reproduce inequalities, and especially how it has been able to exacerbate the impacts of systemic racism, sexism, and classism. Scholars today are further shaping the tools of critique, dialogue, and praxis while also creating new tools of critique to combat neoliberalism. While these are important for the work needed to be critical of neoliberalism, it is also important to note the role that speculative essays as a form of critique, dialogue, and praxis have been and is still are key tenets for critical scholars as well. This form of curriculum inquiry, its specific connection to critical theory, and many of the scholars who are using it today will be discussed later in this chapter.

A Multitude of Critical Theories

I am aware that there are other theoretical frameworks that could be used in this dissertation. I am also keenly aware that more so than the traditional male critical theorists, my own dissertation draws more on the work on more feminist scholars such as Weiler (1988) and Ellsworth (1989), and Critical Race feminist scholars such as hooks (1989/2015; 1994) and Gay (2010), but the immense history that critical theory has is what continues to draw me back in. The critique of critical theory not including conversations around gender, race, and a multitude of other issues is the very reason for more critical scholars to begin using a multitude of critical theories to have those conversations. For me, I believe that the present and future use of critical theory must go beyond both what the scholars of the past used it for, and beyond the use of just

one critical theory. While the history of critical theory may be male dominated, the present and future calls for a variety of critical theories and pedagogies in order to be able to critique the intersectionality of oppression that people, schools, and society are experiencing. My hope is that this dissertation will demonstrate a multitude of critical theories and pedagogies that are currently being used in classrooms, teacher education programs, and communities around the country in order to encourage both future and current teachers to begin or continue on the journey toward becoming a critical educator. When future and current teachers are able to name and understand how structural racism, sexism, classism, and more intersect to further compound inequalities within the neoliberal ideology, specifically as it relates to schools and their role in reproducing these inequalities through schools, we can begin to transform our pedagogies in order the transform these systems. I do agree with the critical feminist theories and critical race theorists that a single critique on social class is not enough, and the use of a multitude of critical theories is needed when critiquing the neoliberal ideology in schools, teacher education, and society as a whole. This opening chapter of this dissertation has shown how critical theory has evolved. The remaining chapters of this dissertation incorporate a variety of critical theories and pedagogies to illuminate the ways in which oppression goes beyond just social class and how the use of many critical theories and pedagogies can act in and create resistance to systems of power.

Educators specifically and the general public should have a knowledge of a multitude of ways in which to critique and understand the world around them. This is especially important for educators as the charges against critical education become more vicious. Many schools, universities, districts, and states around the country are coming under fire in the attack on Critical Race Theory. Similar to the ways in which the Religious and Radical Right were able to push their traditional conservative values through the use of media and fear, Critical Race Theory

and really any kind of education that critiques issues of power injustice have become the new thing to fear. This onslaught of outrage against Critical Race Theory and other critical theories is yet another example of ways in which the powers that be choose when to assert their power. Conwright (2021) shows with specific numbers how the media has been used to fuel the Right's flames against Critical Race Theory. He writes "[f]rom 2012 to 2019, critical race theory was mentioned on Fox News only four times. From June 2020 to May 2021, it was mentioned in 150 broadcasts. By July, it was 250 times a week" (Conwright, 2021, p. 8). Thanks to powerful conservative politicians, the media, and fear mongering, the anger and misinformation against Critical Race Theory spread like fire. Critical and critical race educators are labeled as *unAmerican*, even though they are too often few and far between in many public schools. Many states, my home state of Georgia included, have even begun banning Critical Race Theory. Brian Kemp, the governor of Georgia writes in a press release about the banning of Critical Race Theory in Georgia schools, "[w]ith their vote today, state school board members have ensured education in the Peach State will reflect the freedom, equality, and God-given potential of each individual" (2021, Paragraph 2). His statement further demonstrates the roles of individualism and false meritocracy within the neoliberal ideology. In the time of anti-critical leadership, or even little to no leadership at all, there is an ever more present need for critical theories to be more widely used and to become less dominated by white and male narratives. My hope is that the use of critical theories in this dissertation, that draws on the work of feminist theories and critical race theories as well, shows how critical theories that critique neoliberalism can be used and implemented so that the neoliberal ideology can be seen as something that is connected to a wide variety of other systemic issues in society, and how teachers, teacher educators, and communities can be more inclusive in the future.

Mode of Inquiry: Speculative Essays

Critique as a form of praxis is an essential part of critical theory as a theoretical framework and each group of critical scholars discussed thus far have demonstrated how they are essential parts of one another. I believe this connection to be a significant reason for why speculative essays (Schubert, 1991), as a mode of curriculum inquiry, to be the perfect link to the theoretical framework of critical theory with a critique of neoliberalism. Just as the tools of critical theory and critiquing neoliberalism were shaped over time to become more and more structured for the needs of current scholars, the speculative essay has evolved as a mode of curriculum inquiry over time as well. This evolution, history, and future is why this is a relevant mode of curriculum inquiry for myself to add to the field of curriculum studies as well. Speculative essays as a mode of inquiry was introduced by Schubert (1991), but although he may have introduced the term, he argues that "the philosophical essay has been a major form of curriculum inquiry throughout the history of curriculum studies" (p. 61). The essay as a mode of inquiry has been relevant for many past and current scholars, and Schubert (1991) even argues that the roots of essay writing as it relates to curriculum "can be traced rather directly back to the fifteenth century" (p. 62). Similarly to the reasons for choosing critical theory as a theoretical framework, the longevity that this form of curriculum inquiry has is one reason for why I believe speculative essays to be important for this dissertation. While the intent of the remainder of this chapter is not to trace the history or speculative essays back to the 15th century, the remainder of the chapter discusses the characteristics of speculative essays that make it relevant to this dissertation work. It also highlights significant works of past and current scholars to show the importance of each of these characteristics of speculative essays (Dewey, 1900; Illich, 1983; Schubert, 1991; Schalk, 2018).

One of the reasons for my choice of speculative essays as the mode of curriculum inquiry for this dissertation is because of the characteristics it possesses. Schubert (1991) argues that the speculative essay allows the author to rely on persuasion, speculating or theorizing, and reflecting about topics that will allow the reader to engage in deep thoughts and feelings about topics (p. 65). Each of these characteristics are important goals that I have for this dissertation. The first of the characteristics of speculative essays is persuasion. The goal of my dissertation is to add to the current field of curriculum inquiry, and my hope is that this dissertation adds to the scholarship that is attempting to persuade the field away from pervasive neoliberalism and toward more progressive and intellectual study in the field of education and teacher education. Specifically, my interest is to persuade current teachers in the field and future teachers to begin their own journey toward becoming a critical educator. One such essayist from the past who demonstrates the role that essays can play in persuasion is that of John Dewey. While he is not a scholar who I would consider extremely influential to my own understanding of structural issues within education, I do think his use of speculative essays is relevant work to mention here as it relates to the history of this mode of curriculum inquiry. Schubert (1991) writes about Dewey (1900) as a key scholar in the history of speculative essays, noting one particular work that is important in the history of speculative essays, especially as it relates to the key characteristics of persuasion. In this work Dewey (1900) is attempting to persuade readers that traditional forms of education should be rejected in favor of more progressive forms of education. Dewey (1900) demonstrates the need for more educators to transgress against traditional forms of education for the betterment of their students, and he uses persuasion in his writing to convey this.

Another key tenet of speculative essays that I find relevant to this dissertation work is that of the author's ability to speculate and theorize about the future of the field of curriculum

studies and education. I believe it is important for scholars in a field to theorize about ways to make that field more relevant to the current needs. Illich (1983) is one such essay that demonstrates the power that comes from speculating and theorizing about a total reconceptualization of the field of education. In this essay Illich (1983) discusses what a society would look like if it were *deschooled*. This is speculation and theorizing done well because even the idea of a society without schooling shocked me to think about when I first encountered this work. Using the tenet of speculation, this essay also connects to the goals of the theoretical framework used in this dissertation because Illich (1983) theorizes about the role that labor markets play in education. He argues that the business of schooling, and how it perpetuates labor markets, as well as being a labor market of its own is significant to why schools are the way that they are. He argues that deschooling a society cannot occur until the corporation of school no longer has the power. This essay is a great example of speculation and theorizing because through the neoliberal ideology's hold on education and society, we may never see a system of education that is not tied to the free market, but Illich (1983) shows that we can still speculate and theorize about what that utopian future may look like.

Another example of speculative essays that demonstrates the ability to use speculation, particularly in regards to speculative fiction is Schalk (2018). She writes that "speculative fiction allows us to imagine otherwise, to envision an alternative world or future in which what exists now has changed or disappeared and what does not exist now, like the ability to live on the moon or interact with gods, is suddenly real" (Schalk, 2018, lo. 117). Using speculative essays as a mode of curriculum inquiry, I am able to imagine a future of the field of education that is not tied down by the neoliberal ideology. In regards to this dissertation, it allows me the ability to demonstrate ways in which education and teacher education is currently being degraded through

neoliberalism, while also allowing me the ability to speculate around a more socially just future. Pervasive neoliberalism in the field of curriculum studies and teacher education has created schools and teacher education programs that focus too much on classroom management, high-stakes testing, and standards. This dissertation will explicate those issues as well as theorize about the ways in which teacher education, and teachers already working in classrooms, can become reconceptualized, and work toward more social justice goals within them.

The final characteristic that the speculative essay has that makes it relevant to this dissertation is that of reflection. Through this program of study, I have learned, grown, and gained a deeper understanding of structural issues in the field of curriculum studies, education, and society as a whole. Speculative essay as a mode of curriculum inquiry allows me to reflect on my understanding of the field, and the structural issues that I feel are destructive to the future of the field. In that reflection, I am able to demonstrate further the need for reconceptualizing the way that we think about schooling and teacher education. Speculative essay's tenets of persuasion, theorizing, and reflection, demonstrate why it is a significant mode of curriculum inquiry for this dissertation. While my goals as author of this dissertation are important, the goals of the readers of speculative essays impacts my decision to continue with this mode of curriculum inquiry as well. Schubert (1991) writes that this form of inquiry "allows the reader to follow along the often convoluted journey that leads to greater illumination" (p. 69). I intend for this dissertation to provoke deep thought regarding the pervasive nature of neoliberalism in our schools, teacher education programs, and society. My purpose for using speculative essays as a mode of inquiry is to illuminate the deep roots of neoliberalism in education and teacher education, as well as the ways in which those roots connect to racism, sexism, and classism as a way to elucidate a need for changes in teacher education, as well as current and future teachers,

to resist neoliberalism and reforms. My hope is that through this dissertation work around neoliberalism in teacher education, as well as sharing the convolutedness of pervasive neoliberalism in teacher education, that the reader is provoked to think more deeply about my speculation for a better future for both education and teacher education, and ultimately begin their own journey toward becoming critical educators.

Purpose of Study: Speculative essays to reflect, persuade, and theorize

As I stated at the very beginning of this chapter, education and teaching is something that I have known would be in my future from a very young age. I think most of my colleagues and peers in education right now would agree with that statement in their own lives as well, and even if the passion was not from a young age, the passion for teaching is something that is there now and persists. Looking back on each of my own teacher educational experiences, and having worked with some future educators in my current role, I believe that much of current teacher education is based on lesson planning, behavior managements, and other managerial aspects of teaching that coddle to the neoliberal ideas of what schooling should be, which is to help students be able to pass a test. Knowing my own questions and anger around those teacher education experiences when I first began learning about structural issues that permeate throughout all of society, education, and within day-to-day classrooms, I feel that this work could be impactful in helping my peers in education to begin to be angry as well. My hope is that my peers, colleagues, and others who read this will be encouraged to start their own journey toward becoming a critical educator or simply becoming more critical of the structural inequalities in society as a whole. In taking the critical components of speculative essays, essayists, and other educational thinkers who have shaped my own understanding of the myriad of issues in

education over the past few years, I believe that my own writing could do that as well for those wanting to begin a journey toward becoming a critical educator.

Along with the goal of encouraging my peers and colleagues to start, or continue, their journey in critical education, I believe this dissertation also has personal goals as well. This program has allowed for a lot of personal, emotional, and academic growth in my own life. Many times thus far in learning about the myriad of issues that our schools, teacher education, country, and world at large have, I would be lying if it wasn't overwhelming at times. At one point in this program when I felt so overwhelmed, I found the work of Thích Nhất Hạnh, a Buddhist monk. He writes about the four noble truths of Buddhism which helped me to understand why we as critical educators continue to do the work we do even though it too often goes unappreciated. My own understanding of these truths is that the world is full of suffering, you must be able to understand the root cause of that suffering, and that there are ways to refrain from and to overcome suffering. Thích Nhất Hạnh (2015) writes "[o]ur suffering needs to be identified" (p. 29). Without doing that work first, we are unable to take the steps to overcome it. So while one of my goals of this dissertation is to encourage others to begin their own critical education journey, my other goal is to name the suffering I have come to see in education as well. "We need to embrace our fear, hatred, anguish, and anger" (Hạnh, 2015, p. 29). My hope is that by embracing my anger in order to name the aspects of neoliberalism that I have both learned about and see daily in my own teaching, I will be able to better understand how to overcome them. For that, I believe this dissertation will be both important for myself in my continuous journey as a critical education, and for peers and anyone who may read this to begin or continue their own journey of naming the aspects of society that create an intersectionality of oppression as a way to begin to be liberated from them.

Conclusion: The Dense Forest of Education

Thus far, I have demonstrated the history of critical theory as a theoretical framework and speculative essays as a form of curriculum inquiry, and how the two are connected. My focus now will shift to a brief overview of the topics of the remaining chapters in this dissertation. Each of these topics uncovers a variety of issues that neoliberalism has in schools and teacher education programs. In the densely wooded forest of education that I continue to search my way through, each topic strengthens the hold of neoliberalism in both education and teacher education. Along with uncovering these issues, the purpose of these essays will also be to show ways that some educators, parents, and communities are attempting to resist the structures of neoliberalism, racism, sexism, and classism in schools and teacher education. In chapter two I will explore the manufactured crisis of education through high stakes tests and standardization (Au, 2009; Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Kumashiro, 2012). The manufactured crisis, beginning with the alarm bells that were sounded after the publishing of *A Nation at Risk*, how that publication changes schools and teacher education programs, and how those changes are still impacting education today. Chapter three will explore the multitude of routes that can be taken to teacher certification, and specifically how that impacts teacher education ability to focus on critical issues (Kumashiro, 2009; Romanowski & Alkhateeb, 2020; Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019). In chapter four I will discuss the deskilling of teacher work through classroom and educational practices (Au, 2011; Giroux, 2016; Gorlewski, 2013; Saltman, 2013). Chapter five will focus on neoliberal multiculturalism that leads to superficial understanding and a devaluing of diversity education within both teacher education and higher education in general (Darder, 2012; Mayorga and Picower, 2018; Melamed, 2006). Commodification of teacher education, higher education, and knowledge in general (Giroux, 2019; Saltman & Means; 2015) will be the focus of chapter six.

Finally, the dissertation will end with my own dreams of resistance to neoliberalism and what a post-neoliberal education system could look like. Each of these chapters will shed light on the ways in which neoliberalism degrades public education, the work that educators and teacher educators do, and also how it further perpetuates other forms of oppression such as racism, classism, and sexism.

Each of these essays will demonstrate the wide range of issues that educators like myself and others encounter each day. The essays will illuminate a multitude of ways in which neoliberalism impacts teacher work, teacher education, and the field of curriculum studies. While the issues in the field seem overwhelming, these essays will also show a variety of ways in which teachers, teacher educators, students, parents, and communities are resisting and fighting for a more socially just future for the field of education. Tracing the history of neoliberalism in education and teacher education, understanding how they overlap and further root themselves deeper, and finding new and important forms of opposition to them is one goal of these essays and this dissertation work. My hope is to illuminate for other teachers like myself who may feel overwhelmed with the current state of education that by naming the issues and suffering we face each day and understanding that they are vast, we can overcome them. This dissertation will also show that there are other educators with them in the journey of critical education toward a more socially just future. It will also show that the struggle and fight for that more socially just future, as well as the learning of a variety of critical theories and pedagogies, must continue to be ongoing. Michele Obama (2019) writes "becoming isn't about arriving somewhere or achieving a certain aim [it instead is] a forward motion, a means of evolving, a way to reach continuously toward a better self" (p. 419). That continuous journey toward a more socially just education system is what teachers and teacher educators need to continuously strive for. We as educators

must recognize, understand, and name the sufferings we feel with the current neoliberal

education system as a way to begin the process of overcoming and changing them for a better

and more socially just future in our field.

CHAPTER 2

FABRICATING A CRISIS: SOUNDING THE ALARMS OF FAILURE IN EDUCATION

As an educator one of the parts of my job that I despise the most is the month of May. May is the month in the school year where I spend more time administering standardized tests than I do actually helping kids learn. Most of that month is spent in quiet rooms with kids in desks that are no longer in groups for collaborative learning, but have now been placed in rows and columns. The walls are bare and the desks empty. The only thing that is important now are the computer screens and the numbers that will come back after the students click the mouse for a few hours. Learning stops and regurgitation begins. It is on these hot May days that I witness and become part of the manufactured crisis of education in real time. One particular day in late Spring of 2021 looms in my memory a little more than others like it. It was the first day of Georgia Milestones testing that I had to administer since schools closed the previous year due to Covid-19. I remember looking around at a room full of kids who had not been in a traditional school setting in over a year. For many of the 3rd and 4th grade students this would be the first high-stakes test they would take, but the 5th graders, although they had taken a year off, fell back into their routine of knowing what these tests meant. My role as the educator in the classroom was to ensure that these young kids sat completely still, and completely silent as they took test after standardized test. This year in particular I would also have the added responsibility to remember to ensure that each of the students kept their mask over their nose and mouth to help from further spreading the deadly virus that was still running rampant in our community at the time. All this while they read seemingly endless passages and solved unending math problems. It would seem that in the time of a global pandemic these high-stakes tests should be the last thing we put kid's minds and bodies through, but alas here I stood in a quiet room looking out the

window at a beautiful late spring day blooming outside. As someone who has wanted to be an educator from a very young age. This scene is the exact opposite of what I imagined my career to look like.

I believe this moment is etched into my memory more than any other previous testing day like it, because this was the first testing year in my near decade in education where I had the experience of reading and understanding the works of critical scholars such as Kumashiro (2012), Au (2009/2023), Taubman (2009), and others who had opened my mind to the understanding that these tests were not simply bad for reasons that most teachers think they are bad, but rather were structurally grounded in racist and classist underpinnings. As I stood in that room in my so-called "failing" school, looking around at the mostly Black students, I think this was the moment that I became keenly aware of the manufactured crisis in education, and particularly my role as an educator in it. It was in that instance I realized the manufactured crisis' effects in real time. This is not to say that I had not experienced the manufactured crisis of education a multitude of times before in my career in education, but this felt like a turning point. My eyes were open, my heart hurt, and my passion for changing the system altogether ignited. There had to be something more I could do. There had to be a way to ensure that other teachers like myself were not this far into their career before an eye-opening moment like this.

The manufactured crisis of education, its origins, and continued effects on education as a whole and teacher education specifically will be the subject of this chapter. One of the biggest issues of neoliberalism in education comes from the manufactured crisis of education. Berliner and Biddle (1995) write about the manufactured crisis of education and how these crises work to degrade public schools in the United States. Many other scholars also discuss the crisis of education as something that has been created as a means for corporations and other private

entities to gain a stronger foothold into the public good of education (Gerson, 2012; Kumashiro, 2012, Taubman, 2009). This manufactured crisis has worked toward that goal of allowing corporations, philanthropists, and other private entities into and gaining a larger stake in public schools. The three major players that continue to subject teachers to meeting the goals of this crisis are high-stakes testing (Au, 2009; Au, 2011; Au, 2013), increases in charter schools (Apple, 2006; Au, 2016; Lipman, 2011; Saltman, 2013; Watkins, 2011), and philanthropic interests in education (Kumashiro, 2012; Saltman 2013; Watkins, 2011). Each of these were implemented as a means to solve the fabricated crisis, but none have made a major difference, in student test scores that is. Each of these also directly impacts the work of educators on a daily basis by teaching to the tests, attaching teacher pay to test scores, and school closures based on test scores. This in turn impacts teacher education because programs are working to fit the needs of schools, and Milam (2015) argues that the definition of a *good teacher* depends on your understanding of the purpose of schooling. If the need for schooling is to ensure that students pass the tests, then of course the goal of teacher education will be to create teachers who can do just that, help students pass a test.

While the manufactured crisis of education may be a new concept, Frankfurt School scholars Adorno and Horkheimer (1947/1971/2002) were already demonstrating the ways in which capitalism as an economic structure creates these myths as a way to self-perpetuate some decades ago. They write "the myths which fell victim to the Enlightenment were them-selves its products" (Adorno, Horkheimer, & Cummins, 1947/1972/2002, p. 5). The very systems created to help alleviate the problems, become the problems themselves. An example of this is when Au (2013) writes that even if everyone were able to pass the high-stakes tests, the tests would then need to be changed because the capitalist system ingrained into education needs winners and

losers. Neoliberalism then tells those who become the losers in this system that the solution is charter and private schools. Failure also allows for philanthropists and corporations to invest into schools for their own interests rather than the interests of the public good. The goal of this essay is to illuminate the ways in which high-stakes tests, charter schools, and philanthropist and corporate interests are integrated into schools and how they negatively impact teacher education programs. It also demonstrates ways that educators can use praxis in their own schools and communities to resist these neoliberal and false crises, showing that there are ways that some educators are taking hold of the false crisis and fighting back.

<p align="center">Ringing the False Alarm of Crisis: A Nation at Risk</p>

Many argue that the beginning of the manufactured crisis, or this false emergency in education, was sounded by the writers of *A Nation at Risk* (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Cochran-Smith et al., 2017; Lipman, 2011; McIntush, 2000). This work was commissioned by the Reagan Administration, who as discussed in chapter one also ushered in the deregulation era. The document was meant to show the ways in which public schools in the United States were *failing*. This work demonstrated a need for more requirements and regulations for schools and teacher education programs in the form of standardization, high-stakes tests, and changes in teacher certification regulations. The document also called for punishments of schools and educators that did not meet these new requirements. *A Nation at Risk* created a crisis in education that could seemingly only be fixed by the free market. Lipman (2011) also writes about the ways in which *A Nation at Risk* began the rise of neoliberalism as a form of control in schools. This sounding of the alarm bells of failure has created a false sense of failure.

Berliner and Biddle (1995) write extensively about *A Nation at Risk* and discuss the ways in which it was a manufactured crisis. They write "it appeared within a specific historical context

and was led by identifiable critics whose political goals could be furthered by scapegoating educators" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 4). While their argument does take a more quantitative approach to critiquing *A Nation at Risk* and the aftermath of regulation, accountability, and testing in public schools, they go on to discuss many myths that were explicated about public schools after the publishing of this document. Berliner and Biddle (1995) demonstrate the wide impacts that *A Nation at Risk* had on education and teacher education. McIntush (2000) also writes about the influence that the document had, writing "what cannot be overestimated is the influence the document has had on public discourse" (p. 420). An example that McIntush (2000) gives for the influence around the document is its use of war metaphor in the language of the document. She writes about the wording in the document and how it warns that the "poor education system is literally imperiling national security" (McIntush, 2000, p. 427). *A Nation at Risk* sounded the alarms of fear that were echoed and further perpetuated through media and other public discourse.

  A Nation at Risk has had a major impact on a variety of issues as it specifically relates to teacher education. After its publishing, teachers were required to engage in what the document argued would be much more rigorous certification programs, but at the same time teachers were also becoming less and less trusted to do the job they were being educated toward. Cochran-Smith et. al. (2017) writes "it is now a fact of life that US teacher education focuses on outcomes, and there are far fewer questions raised about accountability per se than there were previously" (p. 580). After the publishing of this document, and the false fear of failure that it created, teachers were scapegoated as the problem. We continue to see this today with tying test scores to teacher pay, and even more recently with the critique of teachers in the unfounded attack on Critical Race Theory. *A Nation at Risk* rang the alarm bells of failure, and rang them

loudly. Because of this document, the public school system in the United States was called a disaster and of course was then in desperate need of fixing, and who else could fix it but the free market? The free market was the very thing that the administration that commissioned the report loved so much. The alarm bells had been sounded, and soon thereafter came the solution in the name of standards, high-stakes tests, billionaire philanthropists, and charter and private schools. Each of these so-called solutions acts as another cog that worsens and further entrenches teachers and their students within the crisis.

Why the cause for alarm now?

The commissioning and publishing of *A Nation at Risk* has particular historical and social context that is relevant to point out briefly here. It was by no accident that *A Nation at Risk* came out during this particular part of United States history. Berliner and Biddle (1995), Harvey (2007), and Apple (2006) all discuss reasons for the social, political, and historical contexts for why the alarm bells of failure around the public school system in the United States were sounded when they were. As mentioned earlier, *A Nation at Risk* was commissioned by the Reagan administration whose goal upon entering office was to eliminate the Department of Education altogether. Berliner and Biddle (1995) argue that both the Far Right and the Religious Right were a main reason behind why these sirens of failure began to wail in the 1980s under the Reagan administration. They write "a major goal of the Far Right has been to decentralize education so that all federal involvement in education is abolished" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 134). They write that the Religious Right had similar goals of abolishing public education, but their reasons were because public schools were too secular. Harvey (2007), Apple (2006), and Brown (2015; 2019) also write about the roles of different social groups that helped usher in the era of neoliberalism in all aspects of society during the 1980s. Much of their argument on these groups

was discussed in chapter one of this dissertation when demonstrating the power that all of these groups were able to use together to create political, economic, and social changes that continue to benefit wealthy elites and the *free market*.

Historically the deregulation era of the 1980s followed the 40s-60s which saw major social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and Labor Movement. During the decades of the 40s, 50s, and 60s, historically marginalized groups began to see and use their power in numbers to enact changes. Many changes had been made in political policies, a big one being the desegregation of schools after the Brown vs. Board of Education decision. Many school districts, especially those in the South were not happy with this ruling. White families would do almost anything at the time to find a way for their child to not have to go to an integrated school. Some examples of ways to resist the Brown vs. Board decision were through resistance such as creating private schools, as well as some districts simply refusing to comply with the law altogether. The county I currently work in is one of ten communities that required a court ordered plan for desegregation before it was implemented on a wide scale within the county (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1973). Roche (1995) discusses in detail the ways in which the South in general and Georgia specifically resisted the integration of schools. Roche (1995) discusses the Sibley Commission and how it was used to change the way the majority of people resisted integration. He writes "Sibley and the commission offered the state a restructured resistance—an elusive plan to preserve public education white maintaining segregation" (Roche, 1995, p. 95). The Sibley Commission laid the groundwork for school choice, and this *restructured resistance* "enabled them to defy the spirit of the *Brown* decision much longer than massive resistance could possibly permit" (Roche, 1995, p. 188). The route of restructured resistance that my own district took is to create neighborhood schools to ensure that the schools

remain segregated based on the neighborhoods in which they reside. This work shows the role that race played in the rise of the false sense of failure in schools, specifically in the South as a means for corporate interest groups, the Far and Religious Right, and the free market to take on a larger role in public education in the United States.

Interestingly enough, race, religion, and politics are the three things that are traditionally thought of as taboo talking points, especially in traditionally Southern households. Yet they happen to be three of the underlying reasons behind why neoliberalism became able to have such a stronghold in both education and society as a whole during the 1980s. Wealthy elites sounded the sirens of failure through *A Nation at Risk*, and subsequently White, Christian, middle-class families heard the sounds and panicked. The powerful had done what they wanted by engulfing the public in flames of crisis and then fanning the flames by offering solutions that only the free market could provide. The context of *A Nation at Risk* created everything that those in power needed to swoop in to make detrimental changes to public education through philanthropy, high-stakes testing, standardization, charter schools, vouchers, and other school choice programs. The impacts of each of these will be further explicated in the next sections of this chapter.

Cashing in on the Crisis: Philanthropy in Education as the Answer

As a public good, public education has always been subjected to criticism around how public money is spent. Money and power go hand in hand, and as a result even before *A Nation at Risk*, billionaire philanthropists have always had interests in education. Many discuss the role that billionaires and venture philanthropists have played in the under and de-funding of education (Ris, 2016; Saltman & Means, 2015, Walton, 2017; Watkins, 2001; Watkins, 2011). Ris (2016) writes about the ways in which philanthropists, specifically Andrew Carnegie, used higher education in the early 1900s, writing "each supported the other's quest for a respected

position in the American public sphere" (p. 423). Philanthropists, such as Carnegie, used their wealth and privilege to shape higher education and public education for the betterment of themselves. Another scholar who discusses the role that philanthropists played in shaping higher education in the early 1900s is Walton (2017). She writes about the importance of studying and critiquing the history of these philanthropists and their interests in shaping education. She writes "[i]n studying the ties between philanthropy and campus, then, we gain insight into how higher education both reflected and helped to shape the values and norms of the larger society" (Walton, 2017, p. 19). Watkins (2001) also writes about the connections between the powerful and their control over education. He writes that education "has long been influenced by the forces of the power structure, the state, and those with an ideological agenda" (Watkins, 2001, p. 10). Neoliberalism became the ideological agenda of philanthropists and other powerful people in the 1980s and after *A Nation at Risk*.

After the alarm bells of false failure were sounded, philanthropists and other wealthy billionaires saw bigger opportunities for them to further shape public education for their own good rather than for the good of the public. Neoliberalism and the faith in the free market became the only possible way to *fix* the United States' broken schools. Saltman and Means (2015) write that "[t]he leaders of the neoliberal reform movement include venture philanthropists, Wall Street financiers, hedge fund managers, opportunistic politicians, and corporate CEOs" (paragraph 17). These people and groups lead the charge of neoliberal reforms for the benefit of themselves, not for the betterment of public education. Kenneth Saltman in Watkins (2011) writes that "[v]enture philanthropy treats schooling as a private consumable service and promotes business remedies, reforms, and assumptions with regard to public schooling" (p. 56). Philanthropy in education is done under the guise of helping schools while

the underlying goal is to further line the pockets of the wealthy elite. Saltman in Watkins (2011) also writes that philanthropists' interests in education "need to be recognized for their hostility to public and critical forms of schooling as well as their alignment with the broader movement to privatize and dismantle public schooling (p. 76). This is an important point made about the ways that philanthropists, billionaires, and corporations are able to impact the work that teachers do on a daily basis. Teachers are confined by the reforms, curriculums, and this year's best way to teach students. They are often unable to implement critical forms of pedagogy that question the structural realities of racism, sexism, and classism in schools because these are often the very structures that philanthropists and corporations depend on to remain in their positions of power.

Another issue with philanthropic interests in education comes because these people and corporations often have little to no experience in a classroom or education at all. Kumashiro (2012) writes "[c]urrent reforms are allowing certain individuals with neither scholarly nor practical expertise in education to exert significant influence over educational policy for communities and children other than their own" (p. 61). The work of educational policy making is too often placed in the hands and minds of those who know little to nothing about the field. Teachers feel this outside presence daily. There is a major disconnect between wealthy corporate interests on education reform and the day-to-day realities of the classroom. Students, parents, and teachers enter these classrooms facing issues of poverty, racism, sexism, and more, but the ideals of philanthropists in their formulating of curriculum and educational reforms tell teachers and their students that these realities are simply myths, and we just aren't working hard enough. One of these ideals that is too often upheld is that of meritocracy. Meritocracy means that structural issues such as racism, sexism, classism, heteronormativity, ableism, and others have no impact on the success a person has so long as that person works hard. Meritocracy goes hand in hand

with neoliberalism because both rely on the idea of individualism as what can fix problems, denying the existence of structural issues, or believing that individual behaviors and not structural changes can make a difference to those structural issues. Winfield (2011) writes that meritocracy as a myth is a major reason for why philanthropy has been able to have the success in impacting schools in the way it has. Winfield (2011) writes that wealthy elites and corporations don't actually believe in meritocracy, but rather that they use the myth for their own greed.

The influence that billionaires, philanthropists, and corporations have over education, educational policy, and curriculum making has huge ramifications on both the day-to-day work that teachers do in classrooms as well as the work of teacher education programs. For this reason, it is important for current and future educators to understand the history of philanthropy in both higher education and education in general. This history directly impacts the issues that we face in classrooms every day. The wealthy and powerful use education as a tool for their own benefit, and understanding the ways that these people and groups use education as a manipulation tool is something that future and current teachers need to gain a critical understanding of in order to act and teach in ways that resist this control over our work and our students.

<div align="center">Tried, Tested, and True: Standards and High-Stakes Tests as the Answer</div>

Two of the biggest alarm bells of failure that *A Nation at Risk* sounded was that students in the United States were not performing as well as students around the world, and that teachers in the United States were not prepared well enough to help them become better. The solution to both of these problems became standards that both students and teachers had to meet, as well as high-stakes tests that would be used to measure success and knowledge of those standards. A main point of *A Nation at Risk* was that school children in the United States were not able to

achieve at the same level as their parents had been able to achieve and that they were not achieving at comparable rates to students of the same age around the world. Berliner and Biddle (1995) discuss the achievement problem in the United States, although their argument is that the achievement problem is a falsity. Their study is quantitative in nature, but proves with numbers that students in the United States "are smarter, and not dumber, than their parents" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 50). They also write about the falsehood around children in the United States achieving at lower levels than students around the world, writing "the myth that American education fails generally in international comparisons is balderdash" (Berliner & Biddle, 1995, p. 63). One flaw in the Berliner and Biddle (1995) argument is that their critique largely relies on the test scores that they are critiquing to make their argument. There are other scholars who argue that the tests themselves are the problem and not simply the way the scores are manipulated. While Berliner and Biddle (1995) make compelling arguments around the falsehood of the manufactured crisis, I tend to agree more with scholars such as Au (2009/2023; 2011; 2013) and Watkins (2001) who argue that the tests themselves are the problem and not just the scores and manipulation of those scores.

Au (2009/2023; 2011; 2013) extensively critiques the standards and high-stakes testing movement. In each of these works he discusses high-stakes testing and their impact on the work that teachers, schools, and students do. Both of Au's (2009/2023; 2013) texts discuss the historical roots of high stakes testing. Au (2013) argues that the tests are rooted in racism, nativism, and the eugenics movement (p. 12), and Au (2009) writes, "it is no coincidence that I.Q. testing, eugenics, and standardized testing all became prominent during the same period that Bobbitt and others imported scientific management into education" (p. 37). Along with the connection of scientific management to the eugenics movement through I.Q. testing Au (2011)

writes about the relationship of high-stakes testing to Taylorism. This is significant, because

scientific management through Taylorism is still very much ingrained into a lot in teacher

education programs around the country. With high-stakes tests, scientific management, and

Taylorism continuing to be ingrained into teacher education it is important for future educators to

understand that each of these has roots in racism and classism. Another scholar who critically

discusses the role that racism played in the original creation of high-stakes testing is Watkins

(2001). He specifically critiques the relationships between I.Q. tests, the Eugenics movement,

and what he called *scientific* racism. He writes "'[s]cientific' racism provided a lasting

framework around which to rationalize all forms of social privilege" (Watkins, 2001, p. 40).

Using high-stakes testing to uphold racism and classism is at the very root of why they were

created, and why they continue to be used today. Seeing the roots of racism and classism in both

high-stakes testing, scientific management, and Taylorism that are still taught and used in teacher

education programs is important for current and future teachers to understand, because without

that understanding as educators we become and continue to be active participants of

(re)producing these systems of oppression in schools. Another critic of high-stakes testing is

Ravitch (2011). She provides a critique of the testing movement that I believe does not go as far

as Watkins (2001) and Au (2009/2023), but is still relevant. She was originally part of the

political party and administration, specifically the Bush Administration, set on furthering

high-stakes tests in schools. Her newly found critique of high-stakes testing is that

"[a]ccountability makes no sense when it undermines the larger goals of education" (Ravitch,

2022, lo. 987). She also makes many arguments about how high-stakes tests do little for students

when they do not consider the context in which students come to school, her argument mostly

discussing poverty and a lack of access to affordable healthcare.

The standards and high-stakes testing movement have had major impacts on teacher education. Teachers are expected to teach toward these standards, and teach to these tests. The impacts of these tests on the work of teachers will be further discussed in the fourth chapter of this dissertation regarding deskilling teachers, but their impact on the ways in which teacher education programs are shaped is important to note here. Because of educational reforms that tie student performance on standardized tests to teacher pay, teacher education programs also feel the pressure to have their future teachers be prepared to help students pass these tests. This creates teacher education programs that lack critical coursework that emphasizes diversity, critical issues in education, and various forms of critical pedagogies, but rather place an emphasis on lesson planning and behavior management. There is a need for teacher education programs to become more critical, but when the purpose of schooling is helping students pass a test, then teacher education that provides critique of and resistance to those systems of power becomes even more difficult. Wilson (2014) even argues that too much theory pushes some future teachers away who don't have those same views. This is the double-edged sword of critical teacher education within a system that only cares about the numbers that teachers and students can produce on standardized tests. While critical pedagogies in teacher education programs may create teachers who are equipped to fight for the betterment of public education, they are not always used in teacher education programs out of fear that future teachers may not continue in the program if it does not align with their beliefs. They may also be rejected by institutions and university systems altogether because of the fear of potential political retaliation in the form of cutting funding. There is a huge need for both teachers and teacher educators to resist this fear and work towards a more socially just future for the field of education.

Your Only Hope: Charter and Private Schools as the Answer

Not so shockingly, high-stakes tests and standards have not been the answer to the false problems in education. What these components of the manufactured crisis have managed to do however is create a need for fixing the so-called failing schools that are unable to have a majority of their students pass high-stakes tests. The schools that have students who do not pass the tests are labeled as failing, and along with that labeling comes the presumption that the teachers and students in them are failures as well. With all of the false sense of failure around public schools in the United States sounded after both *A Nation at Risk* and the high-stakes testing movement, one solution that has been championed as the savior to public school's failure are private schools, charter schools, voucher programs, and other school choice initiatives. In reality, these options and programs have become just another way to defund public schools in the United States and further ingrain the neoliberal idea that the free-market has a solution, and some even believe the only solution, to everything. Mirowski (2014) writes about the reason why neoliberalism is able to sustain itself as an ideology even in and after a time of crisis, specifically writing about the financial crisis of 2008. He writes "the different components often operate in tandem (in time, in co-opting opponents) to produce the ultimate result, which is to allow the market to come to its own inscrutable accommodation to the crisis" (Mirowski, 2014, p. 355). Although he was specifically referring to the financial crisis, high-stakes tests and charter schools have acted as the co-opting opponents in the manufactured crisis of education. High-stakes testing provides the problem and charter schools and other forms of market school choice options becoming the solution to the contrived problem.

There are many that critique the role that charter schools play in degrading public education (Au, 2018; Lipman, 2011; Mora & Christianakis, 2013; Saltman, 2013). Similarly to

the myths of the manufactured crisis, there are also many myths of charter schools as well. One myth that is often championed about charter schools is that they promote progressive, new, and more innovative forms of education as compared to their public school counterparts. Lipman (2011) discusses these progressive origins and original purposes of some charter schools as a progressive alternative to traditional public schooling. She writes "[w]hatever its progressive origins, the charter school strategy has been exploited and rearticulated to the interests of education entrepreneurs, venture philanthropists, investors, and corporate-style charter school chains" (Lipman, 2011, p. 121). Although charter schools may have had the good intentions of providing choice and options for more progressive forms of education, ultimately that good intention has just become yet another way for the wealthy and powerful to exert their control over public schools, and further marginalize communities of color through school closures.

Another myth that is championed around charter schools is that the students that attend the schools are able to perform higher on standardized tests. Mora and Christianakis (2013) dispel this myth, writing "[s]tudents attending charter schools are not faring any better than peers at traditional schools" (p. 93). Some scholars even argue that students in charter schools, specifically those that provide a virtual curriculum, perform below the students enrolled in traditional public school settings (MacClean, 2017). Mora and Christianakis (2013) also critique the ways in which charter schools serve, or underserved, English Language Learners and special education students. They write that charter schools "enroll fewer ELLs and fewer special needs students than the traditional schools they replace" (Mora & Christianakis, 2013, p. 94). Not only are these schools not accomplishing the goal of increasing achievement on high-stakes tests that they claim to be doing, but they are also not as inclusive and progressive in opening the doors to all students as they claim to be either.

Turning schooling into yet another way that students, teachers, and parents become nothing more than a consumer on the hunt for the best school is one of the major issues with the school choice movement. The question is why do so many parents, teachers, and students continue to feel like this is their only hope? There is so much hope put into the idea of school choice, charter school, or vouchers based simply on the idea that they can be the saviors of a *failing* public education system. When the alarm bells of failure ring loud enough and long enough, it creates a need for something different. Parents believe these options to be their only way of helping their child to get a "good" education. While teachers can see them as a way to work in a setting that may allow them more autonomy and the ability to spend less time during the school year in high-stakes testing situations, what is missing in their hope is the understanding of what can happen in public schools when parents, teachers, and students use their collective power to make changes within the system rather than putting all their hope into the free-market to fix them through various school choice options.

Who does the Manufactured Crisis Benefit?

Thus far this chapter has discussed many issues as it relates to the manufactured crisis in education with specific attention to *A Nation at Risk,* philanthropic interests in education, high-stakes tests and standardization, and charter school and other free-market school choice options. Looking at all of these aspects of the neoliberal education system, seeing how they connect and further entrench each other, it can be surprising for why we as a whole have let all of these changes occur in our education system when ultimately their benefits are slim to none to the everyday person. Gerson (2011) writes "[t]he neoliberal agenda of the past 30 years has included the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state; the disenfranchisement of the public— notably working and poor people" (p. 97). A vast majority of people do not benefit from the

neoliberal agenda, and even suffer further from neoliberal education reforms, but still, they continue to be popular. Much of this has to do with the ways in which these reforms have been praised with bipartisan political support. Au (2013), Gerson (2011), Gorlewski (2013), Kumashiro (2009) all write about the ways in which neoliberal education reforms have bipartisan support from both major political parties in the United States. Ravitch (2011) asks a question that helps to understand why these reforms often get this kind of mass support, writing "[w]ho could object to ensuring that children mastered the basic skills of reading and mathematics" (lo. 973)? Taken at that surface level, and without understanding the critical underpinnings of high-stakes tests and the impact that they have on degrading the public education system as a whole, the question can be justifiable. Who wouldn't want everyone to be able to read and conduct basic mathematics? The problem arises when looking at the issues through a more critical lens. Who do these tests, standards, and school choice options benefit? Because we know it is not teachers, students, or their parents. The remainder of this section will look at some of the specific groups that benefit from the manufactured crisis in education.

The Religious and Far Right

One group that has continuously been able to benefit from neoliberal education reforms are the Religious and Far right. These groups have been champions of the charter school movement as a way for them to be able to use public money as a way to push their religious beliefs. These groups benefit from the manufactured crisis in education more than others because the reforms of charter schools and school choice allow for the Religious and Far Right to use public money to fund schools that promote religion, specifically Christianity. There is a need to point out here that the everyday Christian person, like the everyday person from any other religious or nonreligious background, is not benefiting from the manufactured crisis in education,

but rather the people benefiting are those in positions of power that are able to make a profit off of the entrenchment of neoliberal education reforms. Apple (2006) writes about the ways in which the Religious Right has used charter schools. He writes "[f]or conservatiive evangelicals, religion is not a private matter" (Apple, 2006, p. 152). Extending the reach of religion into public goods and institutions is their goal. Apple (2006) also writes "what the Christian right stands for has become accepted as common sense and since they have now made such successful inroads into local and regional politics" (p. 135). The Religious and Far right work together to engrain Christianity, Far-Right policies, and the neoliberal ideology into everyday society and schools. These groups ultimately benefit from these reforms by then being able to profit off of religion, specifically Christianity, being taught in schools. This group is important to understand when looking at why the manufactured crisis occurred and who benefits from it because the Religious and Far Right have worked in tandem to ensure that the neoliberal ideology continues to be in service of their ideals. Allowing the free market version of public schools to rein supreme over actual public schools allows for the Religious and Far Right to line their pockets while also spreading their views and ideas further.

Wealthy Elite and Corporations

Another group that benefits largely from the manufactured crisis in education are the wealthy elite and corporations. These groups benefit from this false crisis by profiting from the multibillion-dollar industry that is public education. Through her work in the Chicago public school system, Lipman (2011) discusses corporate takeover of whole school districts. She writes about how this ultimately reinforces both inequality and racialized neoliberalism through how cities are structured, and the neoliberal idea that the free market is the only true way to save United States public schools. The corporate takeover of public schools occurs when school

districts are broken up and corporations are allowed to step in and take them over due to low scores on high-stakes standardized tests. Lipman (2011) writes about this specifically in Chicago public schools with discussion on how these takeovers disproportionately impact Black and Latino/a neighborhoods. She writes "[c]losing schools pushes existing residents out of neighborhoods primed for gentrification" (Lipman, 2011, p. 66). This shows an example of how wealthy elites and corporations are able to profit from the manufactured crisis of education due to how people are able to obtain wealth through the building of schools, and neighborhoods once they are considered failing.

Similar to the ways in which the Religious and Far Right benefit from charter schools and other school choice options, the wealthy elite and corporations benefit from these as well because they can profit off of the corporatization of public schools. Saltman (2013) writes "[c]harters shift governance to unelected councils dominated by business people, and these councils redistribute decisions about schools away from public community control" (p. 7). When corporations take over public schools, public decision making around what is able to be taught and how those schools are run is taken away from the public and given to the person or corporation that is funding the school. This is an issue because as Au (2018) writes, "they cannot be held accountable for any damage they cause or any of the failures of their policies" (p. 95). In true neoliberal fashion, wealthy elites are given the opportunity, but accept none of the repercussions and responsibilities when issues arise.

The United States Government

The final group that ultimately benefits from the manufactured crisis in education is the United States government. By opening the door to privatization, corporatization, and billionaire philanthropists to encroach upon the public school system, the United States government benefits

because the burden of fully funding schools gets pushed off of them and onto the free market. While the charter school movement has been championed by the Religious Right, venture philanthropists, and other corporate interest groups, the United States government has played an influential role in defunding and underfunding public schools from their conception. There are many others who discuss the bipartisan nature of both accountability measures and defunding public schools through charters and vouchers (Gerson, 2012; Kumashiro, 2009; Saltman, 2013, Zimmerman, 2018). Saltman (2013) specifically writes about how underfunding schools has become a strategy to "set the stage for radically expanded educational privatization for the long run" (p. 9). The United States government ultimately benefits from the manufactured crisis and the neoliberal ideology because both allow for a push of responsibility away from the collective and onto the individual. Au (2018) explains this benefit perfectly by writing:

> In the case of the neoliberal reform of education, instead of addressing the systemic inequalities that produce hunger, housing insecurity, lack of health care, and so forth—all of which could improve a child's educational performance in ways more substantial than any single school focused intervention—the neoliberal's approach is hoist all responsibility on the individual who is supposed to hustle, innovate, or gig themselves out of poverty. (p. 107)

In this chapter, I have discussed the manufactured crisis of education, neoliberal education reforms of high-stakes testing, standardization, charter school, and school choice initiatives, as well as philanthropic interests in education. I have also talked about the people and institutions who benefit from these reforms and the manufactured crisis in education. Each of these initiatives work together to create major structural issues in the foundation of the public school system in the United States. While structural, each of these neoliberal education reforms

also directly impact the work of teachers in the classroom setting. Lipman (2013) writes about the current education system in the United States and argues "[w]e need a fundamental rejection of neoliberal policies and of the capitalist system and its grounding in racial oppression in the United States and a new social vision seeded, in part, by an education movement in the making" (p. 168). I agree with her that major structural changes need to be made to the system of public education in the United States. The remaining part of this chapter will discuss ways in which teachers, teacher educators, and grassroots organizers are attempting to make changes in their own classrooms, schools, and communities as a way to push back against structural neoliberalism in schools.

Ending the Crisis:

Praxis for Teachers, Communities, and Parents to end the Manufactured Crisis in Education

The documentary *Waiting for Superman* (Chillcot & Guggenheim, 2010) perfectly demonstrates a major problem with charter schools and their argument as the only real hope for better education in the United States. While the intent of the documentary was to demonstrate the issues in public education and to suggest that charter schools are the answer to those problems, I don't see the point was made. Throughout the documentary, the narrator explains problems in schools, and also highlights some charter schools that the documentary claims prove they are better than the public school options. While doing this the documentary also follows families who believe their only hope for their child to receive a good education is for their child's number to be called at the charter school auction. In the end, they even have a teacher from one of the charter schools to say "we know that if you apply the right accountability standards, you can get fabulous results" (Chillcot & Guggenheim, 2010). While the intent was to highlight charter schools as the hope for a better future of public education, my opinion is that the ending scene

ultimately disproves their point. One of the final scenes in the film shows a variety of charter

school lottery pools. Most are in auditoriums or gymnasiums full of parents and students

convinced that if their number or name is not called then their future to success in a public school

is lost forever. Some families cheer and cry when their name is called and others break down into

tears when their names and numbers eventually are passed up. One young girl even looks at her

mom and says that she is sad and doesn't understand why they didn't pick her. Watching these

families and kids who believe something as random as pulling a bingo ball will be the only way

for a successful future in education brought on a lot of emotions, being both sadness and anger.

This whole scene encapsulated to me the issue with reducing schools and students to numbers,

charter schools, and philanthropic interests in education.

The neoliberal roots of high-stakes testing, philanthropists, and charter schools are coiled

tight and run deep. These roots are intersecting, interlocking, and make working for a better and

more socially just future in education all the more difficult. While vast and sometimes

overwhelming, these roots are not impenetrable. Some of the ways that educators and parents are

acting in resistance to these forms of neoliberalism in classrooms is through the opt out

movement (Au & Hollar, 2016), in activist scholarship (Lipman, 2011; Stovall, 2013), and

through curriculum standpoint (Au, 2018). The opt-out movement is when parents and educators

encourage students to opt-out of taking high-stakes tests. Au and Hollar (2016) argue that if

enough people choose to do this, the entire educational system would need to be

reconceptualized because these tests directly impact the way schools are funded. By eliminating

the tests, it creates a need to change the system of funding education in the United States. Taking

on the rise of school closures due to *failure*, Stovall (2013) and Lipman (2011) discuss ways in

which educators can work as activists within the communities in which they work and with the

parents, and students in those communities to create changes toward more democratic ways of schooling in localized communities. Finally, Au (2018) discusses using curriculum standpoint theory in schools and teacher education. He writes that curriculum standpoint helps "students understand reality more critically *and* lay a foundation for students to become activist change makers and leaders of mass movement of the present and future" (Au, 2018, p. 194). Each of these forms of resistance are important for current and future educators to explore and use within their own communities based on what is most needed by the people, students, and teachers in them.

The alarm bells of failure in United States public schools have made detrimental changes to the field of education specifically as it relates to how teachers work. My hope with this essay is to encourage future and current educators to take back our career. No longer should we have to stand in those bare classrooms in May watching kids stressed over these standardized tests. No longer should parents be forced to believe that charter schools are their only hope of having a say in their child's education. Public education is a public experience and we as teachers and parents need to work together to ensure that we take back the power to make decisions in these public spaces. Why can't we as teachers now organize and sound alarm bells of the failures that are actually in our classrooms? Why can't we critique corporate intrusion and call for more autonomy over our own work? I believe if we use resistance measures like those discussed in this chapter, we can make changes to the field of education for a more socially just future. The bells have been ringing at us for long enough. Now it's time for us to pick up those bells and begin to ring them for the future of our profession in public education may not be there with another 50 years of deregulation in the private space and over regulation in the public space.

CHAPTER 3

THE SANDS THAT TRAVEL WITH YOU: TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND EDUCATION

PROGRAMS UNDER NEOLIBERALIZED EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Having grown up in the Southeastern part of Georgia my hometown is a cozy little beach town that is bustling with tourists during the summer months, but fairly quiet in the winter months. Growing up and entering into young adulthood one of my favorite hobbies became afternoon beach visits with my friends. On those chilly late fall, winter, and early spring afternoons after a day spent in class, we would go to the beach to do just about anything. We would do homework, begin or end young love affairs, smoke cigarettes and drink beer that we weren't able to buy ourselves, or just talk about where we envisioned our lives five to ten years down the road. Without fail however, those afternoon beach excursions were never an activity that stayed at the beach. The sand always followed you wherever you were going next. I think there is still sand in the unreachable crevices of my car today from those beach visits some fifteen years ago. Like the sand from the beach, a teacher's education and certification follow them through their career. Therefore, it is an important part of the education system in the United States that needs to be examined for its connection to and degradation of through neoliberalism.

In chapter two I analyzed the ways in which neoliberalism is impacting teachers in classrooms across the United States through the manufactured crisis of education. In this chapter I will examine the ways in which neoliberalism is impacting teachers before they are even able to enter a classroom at all. Teacher certification, and the various routes to it are the sand that travels with teachers throughout their careers. Long after they have left their institutions of learning, taken the tests, or attended the week-long training, that certification stays with the teacher for the length of their career. That sand travels into each new district, school, or classroom that a teacher

teaches in. This is why teacher certifications and teacher education are such a powerful aspect of the education system, and why examining the ways that these programs are eroded due to neoliberalism is important as well. Many write about the ways in which certifications and teacher education impact the work that teachers do in their classrooms (Giroux, 1988; Kumashiro, 2009; Saltman, 2013). Each of these scholars discusses a different way in which neoliberalism has impacted teacher education through the role that different forms of teacher certification play.

Kumashiro (2009) specifically discusses the roles that each level of government has over what is required to become a teacher. He discusses the role that neoliberalism and the Right plays at the federal, state, local, and even campus level when it comes to teacher education and certification. The federal level decides the standards and tests that are required to be taken while the state determines the funding that schools and sites of teacher education receive. Kumashiro (2009) argues that local politics play a huge role in the rise of alternative certifications because of their cost and ability to be completed quickly, because in areas with a shortage of teachers these alternative certification routes can be preferred. Finally, at the campus level for sites of teacher education Kumashiro (2009) argues that censorship plays a major role in what future teachers are taught. We see a prime example of this kind of censorship in the critiques against Critical Race Theory. Universities and teacher educators who teach forms of critical pedagogies, critical theories, Critical Race Theory, and critical whiteness studies are under attack and being censored in terms of fear of funding. This attack occurs because institutions of higher education are often thought of as being an ivory tower, or a place that is elitist and cut off from the rest of society. Kumashiro (2009) writes this about the argument for bias in higher education, "[d]ebates seem more focused on how to address the liberal bias, rather than on whether there really is such a bias or, and perhaps more important, on whose or what purposes it serves when we fail to

question the assumption that such a bias exists" (p. 76). This idea that places of higher education have a liberal bias creates issues in teacher education because course content that is critical of structural issues in society can be perceived as biased, especially to white and middle-class students who believe in the neoliberal farce of meritocracy.

One scholar who talks in depth about being critical in higher education spaces, specifically as it relates to teacher education, is Giroux (1988, 2019). Giroux (1988) looks at teacher education spaces and argues that they are not critical enough. He argues in this work that teachers should become *transformative intellectuals*, or people who put thinking and theory into action and practice. Creating future teachers who are transformative intellectuals far too often is not what happens in teacher education programs in higher education. When forced to compete with alternative routes that are often shorter than two weeks, while also being under the constraints of ensuring that their program is able to help future teachers pass a certification test or create a certification portfolio, the goal of teacher education as a breeding ground for transformative intellectuals too often falls short of Giroux's (1988) goal. In a more recent work, Giroux (2019) writes about the role that neoliberalism has had in degrading not just teacher education, but higher education more specifically. He writes:

> One of the major challenges now facing educators, especially in light of the current neoliberal attack on public workers, is to reclaim the language of the social, agency, solidarity, democracy, and public life as the basis for rethinking how to name, theorize, and strategize a new kind of education as well as more emancipatory notions of individual and social agency, as well as collective struggle. (Giroux, 2019, p. 47-48)

Neoliberalism's role in degrading higher education will be discussed at more lengths and detail in chapter six when discussing the commodification of education, but it is important to mention here because when institutions of higher learning become as wrapped in a blanket of accountability measures, and required to compete with other certification options and requirements as they are now, then the critical nature of higher education is eroded. Two other scholars to discuss the ways that higher education in general and specifically sites of teacher education as not being critical enough are Brown (2015) and Saltman (2013). They argue that these spaces are not critical because the work teachers are required to do in classrooms is not critical. The work that teachers do in the classroom is not critical, because of the emphasis that is put on standards that must be taught and tests that must be passed. Due to this, teacher certification and teacher education programs are going to be required to push education on lesson planning and behavior management instead of critical education. While there is a huge need for sites of teacher education specifically and higher education in general to maintain the role of critique, neoliberalism as a dominant ideology has made critique in public higher education much more difficult. In this essay I will discuss the role that three issues in teacher certification play in the inability for teacher education to be as critical as I believe it should be. The three issues that will be explicated in this chapter are the CAEP standards and other certification standards, edTPA and state certification tests, and alternative routes to certification. I will demonstrate how each has had an impact in further implementing neoliberalism into teacher education programs.

<div align="center">Teachers Need Standards Too</div>

The first issue that this chapter will discuss is the role that teacher education accreditation standards have in degrading sites of teacher education. These standards follow the false sense of

failure that was sounded in *A Nation at Risk* that teachers in the United States were not being prepared well enough to teach the students. *A Nation at Risk* claimed that teacher preparation programs at the time were not doing enough to better prepare teachers for their future in classrooms. This created a rise in accreditation standards for teacher education programs, and these standards perpetuate the neoliberal ideology that public goods and institutions need to be regulated and held accountable to the needs and goals of the free market. These standards have a long history in the field of teacher education and many scholars discuss the role that teacher education standards have on teacher education programs. Currently the standards being used most widely are the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, or CAEP standards. Prior to CAEP, sites of teacher education in the higher education setting were accredited under the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Before I discuss the language of the standards themselves, I find the change in language of the wording of the name of the accreditation body significant to mention as well. NCATE had the words teacher education, while CAEP now uses the words educator preparation. This demonstrates just one way of how neoliberalism has changed the field of teacher education and curriculum studies. Future teachers are not educated towards the field, but instead are prepared for it.

Both sets of standards, the NCATE and the CAEP, have been critiqued as being vague and lacking rigor (Endo, 2015; Schwarz, 2015). Endo (2015) argues that the diversity standards lack a sense of rigor, while Schwarz (2015) discusses the lack of focus on social issues in the standards, arguing that the standards promote skills knowledge over critical knowledge. Vagueness in the standards' language, specifically as it relates to diversity, creates a vagueness in the way that teacher education programs can meet the standards as well. Interestingly enough, the standards meant to better prepare teachers for their future in classrooms have not actually

accomplished their goal. In actuality many scholars argue that teachers are still not prepared to

best educate the students in their classrooms, although their focus is more on the idea that

teachers are entering the field not prepared to meet the diverse needs of their students, and too

often present a superficial understanding regarding their diverse students (Brown, Parsons, &

Worley, 2005; Fox & Diaz-Greenberg, 2006; Nganga, 2015; Reiter & Davis, 2011; Taylor, 2010;

Tinkler & Tinkler 2016). Both the NCATE and the CAEP seem to continue to hold teacher

education programs to a sense of accountability that cares mostly about making sure that future

teachers are able to fulfill their role in classrooms to improve test scores, lesson plan, and

manage behavior, and far too often leave out a critical understanding of structural issues around

race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

Looking at the history of these accreditation standards, The NCATE standards were

originally developed in the 1950s and the CAEP standards took over around 2009.

Cochran-Smith et. al. (2017) look at the rise of the accountability era in education. They trace the

history and argue that teacher education reforms such as accreditation standards like NCATE and

CAEP are an extension of neoliberalism and neoliberal reforms that ultimately undermine

democratic education. Examining the NCATE standards first, many scholars specifically critique

the diversity standard. The NCATE diversity standards stated:

> The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and provides experiences
>
> for candidates to acquire and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional
>
> dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that
>
> candidates can demonstrate and apply proficiencies related to diversity.
>
> Experiences provided for candidates include working with diverse populations,

including higher education and P–12 school faculty, candidates, and students in

P–12 schools. (NCATE, 2008, p. 12).

As mentioned previously, the NCATE standard on diversity had been critiqued as being too vague. King and Butler (2015) argue that the NCATE standards allowed for teachers to enter classrooms with a limited understanding of multicultural education because of the vagueness in the standard. Ell et. al (2017) argue that the vagueness even encourages and perpetuates teachers to have a deficit view of diverse students once in classrooms. Looking at the CAEP standards, it seems they do even less to discuss the role of learning about diversity and multicultural concepts in teacher education programs. They do not have one specific standard that relates to diversity, but rather they claim that their standards "integrate equity and diversity throughout candidates' courses and their developmental clinical experience with diverse P-12 students" (CAEP, 2020). The vagueness in language around diversity in both sets of accreditation standards can lead to vagueness in the ability for institutions of teacher education to claim that they are meeting the standard. Under NCATE, institutions could have only one course that covers diversity, but the programs still meet the standards set forth by NCATE. Under CAEP, the vagueness of integration leaves the institutions the ability to claim that diversity is integrated throughout. Like the standards that teachers are expected to follow with their students, teacher educators are held to these accreditation standards as well, and just like the standards for students I believe the idea of standardizing future teachers is an extension of the neoliberal ideology that ultimately undermines democratic and socially just education. While I disagree with the standards altogether, I believe it is important to note the scholars who critique them as they are within the neoliberal education system that we currently have. The standards in general, and specifically standards that lack a focus on understanding of social issues of racism, sexism, classism,

heteronormativity, and more are detrimental to the future of teacher education programs. It is especially concerning as the classrooms in which future teachers are entering became more overwhelmed with issues stemming from these structural issues. There is a need for going beyond standards in teacher education accreditation altogether, but it is also important that while the field continues to be tied to standards that we move beyond standards with vague language as it relates to social and structural issues in society and schools.

More than a small change in the language of the standards, others who critique the standards say that they are used to increase efficiency and effectiveness (Papanastasiou, Tatto & Neophytou, 2011; Romanowski & Alkhateeb, 2020), do not address diversity and social issues (Schwarz, 2015; Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019), and argue that there is a lack of evidence that the standards even work to better prepare teachers for the classroom (Call, 2018). These standards are the result of the manufactured crisis and the need for teachers to be prepared more than they need to gain a critical education around issues that impact their day-to-day work in the classroom. When looking at the ways that accreditation standards have been used to increase efficiency and effectiveness, with effectiveness being the ability to raise test scores, Romanowski and Alkhateeb (2020) discuss how these standards create a *McDonaldization* of teacher education. They argue that *McDonaldization* is the process of increasing efficiency to make sure that all things, specifically public goods and services such as schools, are more closely run like a McDonalds. Increasing efficiency as measured by standards and test scores is a major aspect of the neoliberal ideology in schools and teacher education.

Beyond the increase in efficiency measures and a lack of focus on social issues and diversity, the standards like the high-stakes tests that students are required to take to demonstrate their learning cannot be proven to show that they better prepare teachers for the classrooms that

they enter after their programs (Call, 2018). Call (2018) discusses teacher accreditation standards in a variety of contexts including the United States, Finland, China, Singapore, and delves deepest into the standards within the Australian context. For each context however Call (2018) demonstrates how the standards in each country show little impact on student achievement on high-stakes tests. While I disagree that the success of a teacher is, or should be, measured by student test scores, this does disprove the lie that standards and increased efficiency and accountability improve a teacher's ability to get a student to pass a test. We know that this is because the tests were not designed for all to pass (Au, 2009). Similarly, teacher accreditation standards are not designed to actually improve teaching but rather are an extension of the neoliberal ideology meant to further attach teacher education to the systems that reproduce an intersectionality of oppressions in teachers, their students, parents, and the communities in which they teach. The issue that standards were designed to help, which is to raise test scores for students, actually shows little impact of being able to. This demonstrates again that a focus on content knowledge, test taking, behavior management, and lesson planning with little to no focus on social issues and critical education does not benefit the education system. The neoliberal lies of efficiency and standardization doesn't work for students, or teachers either. I have discussed here the issue with teacher education accreditation standards, how they have little to no focus on critical education, are used to increase efficiency and student test scores, and how they ultimately do not show signs of creating better teachers, as measured by test scores. Another aspect of the issue with accreditation standards is that they ultimately give rise to alternative routes to teacher education. These alternative routes will be discussed later in this chapter, but I now turn to the neoliberal issue of certification tests that many teachers are required to take and pass before entering a classroom. Even after they have gone through a teacher education program that has

proven to be able to meet these accreditation standards, many future teachers must also take a test to prove their abilities, because one of the two is never enough, right? Standards and tests must go hand in hand as we can't have one without the other.

Teachers Need to Pass a Test too

Yet another issue with teacher education and teacher certification today is the role that certification exams and portfolios play in being the entryway into classrooms for teachers. Certification tests such as Georgia's GACE assessment, or Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators, and education portfolios such as edTPA, are widely used in teacher education programs today. These certification tests and portfolios have become the norm as the way that future educators prove that they are ready to enter into a classroom. One of the issues with these tests is that by relying heavily on high-stakes tests as a certification tool for future educators, it closes doors to classrooms rather than opening them for a more diverse teaching force. These certification tests, similar to those that are required to be taken by students, are damaging to the field of education because they often disproportionately keep teachers of color from entering the field. Gates (2019) writes about how these exams are particularly harmful and exclusionary to future teachers of color. This is due to both their middle-class content and the high cost of taking and re-taking the tests. Croft, Roberts, and Stenhouse (2015) write about education reforms such as certification tests saying, "[e]ducation reform initiatives have caused K-12 schools and colleges of Education to re-evaluate curriculum content, not toward expanding multidimensional learning opportunities, but rather toward adapting to the singular dimensions of test expectations" (Croft, Roberts, & Stenhouse, 2015, p. 830). Teachers, like the students in their classes, are reduced to their ability to answer multiple choice questions accurately on a

high-stakes test. One test on one day determines a future teacher's fate, and their ability to enter a classroom.

These tests are damaging to the field of teacher education in more than just their ability to close the door to classrooms for many future educators. They also allow for another extension of the neoliberal ideology, specifically racialized neoliberalism to permeate throughout the education system. Allowing test makers and corporations to have this much impact on the people who are granted the ability to teach is very detrimental to the field. Gates (2019) writes about these issues with high-stakes exams for teachers, writing "[r]equiring high-stakes exams as gateways into the profession is a social justice issue worthy of action" (p. 7). In this work Gates (2019) discusses students in her teacher education program that were successful in the program, but were unable to pass the certification tests. Both of the students discussed in this work were from under-represented communities in her teacher education program. These students failing the certification tests ultimately led Gates (2019) to conducting research on the social justice issue with certification tests, and how activism can play a role in creating changes to the overall structure that requires these tests to be taken in the first place. The role that certification tests play in keeping future teachers, especially future teachers of color and future teachers from other marginalized groups, from entering into classrooms is a major issue in the field of teacher education. It is an especially important issue to investigate when looking at the role that the neoliberal ideology has had in creating a need for and continuing to profit from these tests. These certification tests are not the only thing keeping certain teachers from entering the classroom. Certification portfolios are becoming increasingly popular as a tool to measure future teachers' ability to be successful in a classroom as well. They are yet another way that corporations and

the free market are given the ability to determine which teachers are able to enter into classrooms.

Another form of certification that has been popularized in recent years is that of portfolio assessments such as edTPA. These portfolios require future teacher candidates to prepare and record lessons that will be uploaded and scored to determine their effectiveness as educators. Again, effectiveness here being helping students to pass a test and meet standards, not becoming critically engaged learners of the world around them. Tuck and Gorlewski (2016) write that this "[defines] teaching in ways that constrained and reduced it to a series of technical, predictable, and visible acts" (p. 203). While edTPA and its connection to the neoliberalization and commodification of teacher education will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six of this dissertation, I think it is important to discuss it briefly here because of its growing role in the way that future teachers are gaining entryway into classrooms across the country. There are many scholars who critique edTPA, its connection to neoliberalism in teacher education, and the ways that it negatively impacts teacher education and certification. Julie Gorlewski and Eve Tuck are two scholars who critique edTPA in this way, and they write about the ways in which this tool is used to further weave the goals of neoliberalism, racism, and settler colonialism into teacher education. Tuck and Gorleski (2016) write that edTPA demonstrates "how settler colonialism and antiblackness are interwoven into this tool of education policy" (p. 148). Future teachers are expected to submit recorded lessons that prove they can meet certain standards, and white middle class teacher candidates want to ensure that they produce a high score on these portfolios so too often they pick and choose which classes and schools will help them to make the highest scores, with these schools often being those with middle- and upper-class white students.

Both the high-stakes tests and portfolio assessment of teacher candidates and future teachers demonstrate how education reforms of standardization and testing have not only had impacts on the students in classrooms, but on the teachers in them as well. Before even being given the opportunity to enter a classroom, teachers are subjected to expensive tests or portfolio assessments that allow the corporations that create them to generate profits. These forms of assessment on future teachers are detrimental to the future of public education. One reason being that there is a shortage of teachers in the United States, and closing the doors to classrooms, especially to teachers of color and other diverse populations of future teachers that are disproportionately impacted by these high-stakes certification exams and portfolios is extremely detrimental. In a time where we need more teachers, doors to becoming a teacher shouldn't be closing. Taking what has been discussed thus far in this chapter regarding accreditation standards, certification tests, and certification portfolios, I will now shift my discussion to another issue that arises in teacher education due to the embeddedness of the neoliberal ideology within the system. These standards and tests, although created under the guise of fixing or bettering teacher education, have not worked for what they were created to fix which was to raise student test scores. Although their inability to *work*, or raise test scores, is by design, it has of course created yet another problem. Therefore, under neoliberal logic it is yet another problem that can be fixed by inviting the free market in to provide newer and better teacher training and certification programs. Enter the vast array of alternative routes to teacher education and certification programs that are available today.

Let's Get this Done Faster: Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification

Looking historically at teacher education, a big shift occurred in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States, specifically as it relates to teacher education and a rise in alternative routes to

teacher certification. The 80s and 90s in the United States was marked with a time of rapid deregulation of the private sector that went hand in hand with rapid accountability measures on public goods and services with one prime example being education. The increased deregulation of the private and overregulation of the public lead to a significant impact on teacher education. Accountability measures that have already been discussed in this chapter such as teacher accreditation standards, high-stakes certification tests for future teachers, and other neoliberal education reforms that promoted accountability over autonomy ultimately lead to a rise in alternative routes to teacher education programs in traditional university settings. Cochran-Smith et. al (2017) argue that the narrative of failure in teacher education was another leading cause for the rise of alternative routes to certification. Along with the created narrative of failure under the Reagan Administration, Schneider (2018) argues that deregulation and a false failure narrative created spaces for neoliberalism to creep further into teacher education as a way to fix the problem that it ultimately created. Kumashiro (2010) writes about neoliberal policies like alternative routes to teacher certification, and their contradiction. He writes "this contradictory nature of neoliberal policy initiatives that best illustrates how such initiatives can serve to undermine the very things that they purport to strengthen, be it public schooling or teacher preparation" (Kumashiro, 2010, p. 60). The contradiction Kumashiro (2010) is referring to here is the double standard that is placed on the different routes to teacher certification as compared to traditional routes to teacher certification within the higher education setting. Traditional routes to teacher education through the university or other higher education space are placed under a great deal of accountability measures, standardization, and scrutiny which ultimately create the means by which to call them failures, while many alternative routes to teacher certification are often given much more autonomy, and are praised for being progressive. The contradictory nature to

regulate things in the public sphere while de-regulating those in the private sphere is a key tenant of neoliberalism.

Beyond the inconsistency in logic for the need of alternative routes to teacher education and certification in the first place, these alternative routes have become commonplace. Creating new and shorter ways for teachers to be ready to enter classrooms has had a major impact on longer teacher education programs that typically occur in higher education settings. Universities and other smaller higher education programs are now feeling the pressure to compete with the shorter alternative routes that often prepare future teachers for the classroom in a few short weeks. These shorter programs claim to be a jumpstart to teaching, focusing on lesson planning and behavior management. These programs are typically attended by people who are making a career shift from another career to teaching. One of the most famous, or infamous, of these alternative routes to certification is Teach for America (TFA). This alternative certification route is critiqued the most, and one critique of the TFA program comes from Lahann and Reagan (2011). They argue that Teach for America as an organization is both progressive and neoliberal in nature. They argue that it is progressive because it allows a more diverse teaching field to enter classrooms, but neoliberal in its managerial aspects. Another critique of this program, and other shorter certification programs like it, is that the teachers are less prepared (Mentzer, Czerniak & Duckett, 2019). Saltman (2013) also argues that the manufactured crisis has created a push for "alternative certification cleansed of theory, weakening the power of state boards of education, and pushing for privatization through think tanks and venture philanthropies" (p. 26). These programs are often only a few days or weeks long, and therefore do not have the time to stress a deep critical understanding of social justice issues in education, or anything beyond classroom management techniques and lesson planning.

Teach for America's website describes their success through the number of people who have gone through their program writing that they have "58,600 alumni in over 50 regions around the country, our network now includes more than 14,900 alumni teachers, 1,377 school leaders; 601 school system leaders; over 1,108 policy and advocacy leaders; more than 280 elected leaders; and 238 social entrepreneurs" (Beard, n.d., paragraph 2). Although still small compared to the number of teachers in the United States altogether, the impact that Teach for America and other alternative routes like it have had on institutions of teacher education and certification cannot be overlooked. As mentioned, these shorter programs are creating stress on traditional teacher education programs in the higher education setting. The two- and four-year programs in the higher education setting are having to compete in the neoliberalized teacher education market with programs that are only weeks, or days long instead. Between new standards, a push for shorter certification time, and a need for more and more teachers, teacher education and certification programs are feeling the pressures of the neoliberal education system. Teacher education has had to become competitors in the education market while also retaining the stress of blame for all the problems in education. Taubman (2009) writes about the ways in which teacher education is blamed for the problems in education:

> When was the last time anyone blamed business schools for the failing economy
> or corporate scandals? The idea that if there were a major financial crisis, business
> schools would be lectured to by educators and teachers and held accountable by
> politicians advised by, for example, curriculum theorists, is unimaginable, unless,
> of course, one recalls that the reverse is exactly what has happened in education.
> (p. 139)

Along with his questioning of why teacher education is blamed for the problems of the neoliberal education system, Taubman (2009) also provides four reasons for why teacher educators as a whole are not resisting the reforms that are being thrust upon them. He argues these four reasons to be fear, shame, fantasy, and loss. The fear of losing resources, shame for how the profession is depicted in the media, fantasy of the way that educators are held to a standard of putting their students over themselves and everything, and finally the loss of grand ideals that education was meant to fix (Taubman, 2009, p. 128). While these four reasons may be reasons for why teacher education as a whole is not resisting the neoliberalization of the field, these reasons do not stop all sites of teacher education, or specific teacher educators, from creating resistance to these reforms. While there is a need for more resistance, the remainder of the chapter will highlight scholars, sites of teacher education, and others who are putting theory into praxis as a way to make teacher education more socially just, focusing on creating spaces that promote and develop future teachers who take critique and critical understanding and apply it to practice in their classrooms.

<div align="center">Teacher Education as Sites of Resistance</div>

In this chapter I have discussed in detail accreditation standards, teacher certification tests, and alternative routes to teacher certification. I have examined the ways in which each of these have become subject to neoliberalism as an ideology. Looking at each of these issues both individually and together it demonstrates a need for teacher educators, and sites of teacher education to resist these reforms. Resisting neoliberal reforms that impact future teachers before they are even able to enter a classroom is crucial in the fight for a more socially just future for both teacher education specifically and education in general. Gates (2019) writes that "[s]cholars who do work to identify oppressive structures must also be willing and able to engage in

activism to collaboratively disrupt those structures" (p. 7). Taking the theory and putting it into action towards resistance is key, and the remainder of this chapter will discuss some of the ways that teacher education, teacher educators, and others are participating in this kind of praxis. Some examples of resistance include the use of different accreditation bodies other than CAEP, teacher educators' resistance to edTPA, specific teacher educators continuing to push for critical education in teacher education spaces, and a push for local schools and districts in taking up their own rules in what is required to become a teacher.

CAEP and its predecessor NCATE are two teacher accreditation bodies that have been discussed in this chapter as accountability measures for teacher education that have been critiqued as being too vague, narrow, and leaving out a specific critique of social issues as it relates to teacher education. One way that some sites of teacher education are resisting these forms of neoliberalism is by choosing accreditation bodies that more closely align with critical forms of education. One such accreditation body is the Association of Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation, or AAQEP. While I still take issue with the use of the word preparation over education, this accreditation body has shown to be more socially just than others by some (Will, 2019). One of the main reasons that some teacher education programs are choosing AAQEP over CAEP is because the former allows for more collaboration with local communities to decide what the teacher education programs in their area need. Another reason for the choice is that AAQEP does not require data tracking on student performance for teacher education graduates when CAEP does (Will, 2019). While another accreditation body is not the best answer to the teacher certification problems, as it is just another way for the two to compete in a neoliberalized education system, having a teacher certification option that focuses less on

accountability and more on making sure that future teachers are meeting the needs of local communities is a plus within the neoliberalized system of teacher accreditation.

Going hand in hand with the resistance to traditional teacher certification are those scholars and teacher educators who are resisting high-stakes tests and portfolios at the conclusion of teacher education programs. An example of this comes from the work of Gorlewski and Tuck (2019), who write about their creation of a more socially just performance assessment system than edTPA. They argue that it is important for sites of teacher education to "move beyond complaints about neoliberal creep in order to create and illuminate pathways to action and contestation" (Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019, p. 13). In doing this kind of work they wanted to resist the overall embrace of edTPA in teacher education. Their work in creating their own system of evaluating the work of future teachers was meant to "call into question the viability of edTPA" (Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019, p. 64). In doing this they were arguing that "instead of participating in a corporate-run standardized performance assessment, universities work with each other to form consortia, and then develop their own process for creating their own scoring criteria" (Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019, p. 64). This is important because it allows for teacher educators to work together to take back their institutions. It allows for teacher educators, and not the corporations in charge of scoring, to have a larger say in who is able to enter a classroom. This kind of resistance to further neoliberalization of teacher education is imperative for the future of teacher education if they are to become spaces for critical education and resistance to occur.

Another example of resistance to neoliberalized teacher education are those teacher educators who continually push for more socially just teacher education and critical teacher education. One such teacher educator is Henry Giroux. He believes that teacher education programs should help future teachers to develop their own theoretical framework through which

they will critique and view the world. He writes "[l]acking a theoretical framework from which to develop a methodology and content, teachers lacked significant criteria to shape, guide, or evaluate their own work. But more importantly, they pass their distrust of theory on to their students and help in perpetuating intellectual passivity" (Giroux, 1988, lo. 760). While Giroux here was writing in a different educational context than we see today, I believe his work is still relevant in today's context because educators like Giroux (1988) believe that teacher education should be sites that create future teachers that are able to continually critique issues of power and injustice in both education, and more broadly in society as a whole. This kind of work continues to be necessary today, because creating these spaces and empowering these kinds of teacher educators is important due to the dire state of public education as discussed in chapter two. Giroux (2019) argues that a "great challenge facing higher education in a time of neoliberalism and tyranny is to reimagine and struggle for the university as a public good, one that takes seriously the challenge of addressing how the habits of democracy as part of a broader understanding of education and the institutions that sustain it can be both produced and protected" (Giroux, 2019, p. 139). With the current state of education, higher education, and teacher education, the time for resistance to neoliberalism and its degradation of public goods is necessary if there is to be a future of public education at all. Two other scholars who demonstrate acts of resistance in higher education spaces are Brown (2015) and Au (2018).

Brown (2015) discusses the need for resistance to neoliberalism in higher education in general while Au (2018) focusses more on teacher education and public education more specifically. Brown (2015) writes "contemporary economics of higher education itself exert enormous pressures on college and universities and especially liberal arts curriculums to abandon all aims and ends other than making students 'shovel ready' when they graduate" (p. 192).

Participating in active critique of this shoveling is a way that higher education can act in resistance to these reforms and movements. Au (2018) discussed the multitude of ways that he resists changes in public education from how he acts as a critical scholar to how he resists as a parent. The list of scholars doing this kind of work could go on and on including the work of Michael Apple on critical education and the role that critical educators can play in creating democratic schools. Apple and Beane (2007) documents the stories of teachers at five different democratic schools across the United States. They write about the process for how these schools are able to include teachers, parents, and students into what the curriculum and school will look like. They write that these schools "explicitly seek change in antidemocratic contentions in the school and society" (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 18). These schools are great examples of what can be done at the local level to enact changes within schools if parents, teachers, administrators, and students are given the opportunity to create democratic schools. bell hooks is another scholar who up until her recent passing continued to demonstrate to critical educators the importance of a pedagogy of hope when trying to practice education in a way that leads to freedom rather than further oppression. She writes "[e]ducation as the practice of freedom affirms healthy self-esteem in students as it promotes their capacity to be aware and live consciously" (hooks, 2003, p. 72). Yet another scholar who demonstrates the critical education that future teachers should be able to encounter and learn about in their education programs is Gloria Ladson-Billings. She writes about culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), but also goes on to further the idea to create culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Ladson-Billings (1995) describes culturally relevant pedagogy as not unlike critical pedagogy but that it is "specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment (p. 160). In her more recent work, she discusses how culturally relevant, responsive, or sustaining

pedagogies are not something that can simple be learned through a workshop or certification, but rather that it takes really knowing the literature, understanding the theory, and researching within the area for quite some time (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 352). Each of these scholars and more demonstrate how learning about critical theories and practicing them within classrooms can lead to much more democratic, socially just, and culturally relevant learning. While this is in no way an exhaustive list of scholars acting in resistance to neoliberal education reforms, this does demonstrate that there are teachers, teacher educators, and scholars who are working in resistance to neoliberalism and other forms of oppression in sites of higher education and teacher education. Learning about and from these different forms of critical theories and pedagogies is imperative for future teachers. More of these forms of pedagogies and theories will be discussed in chapter four of this dissertation.

The last form of resistance that this chapter will discuss is that of local schools and districts that make their own rules for what is required to become a teacher. An example of teacher education and sites of teacher education, students, and others doing this kind of resistance is Gorlewski (2013). This work provides a collection of essays that examines ways to opt-out of the educational reforms that degrade teacher education. Each of the essays demonstrates ways that teachers, parents, and students can create changes to the field of education so that the future of teacher education is more socially just. These forms of resistance include future teachers that opted-out of certification testing, students who participate in counter-recruitment demonstrations, grassroots efforts to enact changes to local testing policies, and overall helping future generations of students and teachers to be provided more opportunities to learn about social justice movements. These forms of resistance on the local level are imperative to enacting changes on a wider scale. Teachers, parents, administrators and more who

choose to create resistance are needed in the fight for a more socially just future for teacher education and higher education in general. My hope is that these essays encourage my own peers to engage in learning about social justice issues in education and our own community. McGirr (2015) describes how this did occur in Orange County California in the 1960s, but in the opposite direction. She writes about the ways in which wealthy white families infiltrated local school boards as a way to make the decisions on what could or could not be taught in schools, decide who can and cannot become a teacher, and to start a grassroots political movement at the local level. This continues to be done in local school boards around the country, as conservative parents are currently doing this again, especially in towns across the South. I argue that if this can be done for the benefit of the neoliberal ideology or conservative ideals, it can also be done for the benefit of public schools, public educators, and critical education.

In this chapter I have discussed current issues in the area of teacher certification, and how these issues have been directly impacted by the role that neoliberalism as an ideology has had on them. Some of the examples discussed in this chapter have been teacher education accreditation standards, teacher certification tests, and alternative routes to traditional teacher education in higher education. Along with these current issues in teacher certification, forms of resistance were discussed in this chapter as well. Some forms of resistance included teacher educators pushing back on the neoliberal academy, sites of teacher education pushing for critique and critical education, and local schools, parents, and students working together to enact changes in communities and schools at the local level. These forms of resistance, while not the only way to resist neoliberalism in the area of teacher certification, are important first steps to ensure that the future of teacher education can create future teachers who are more than just teachers who themselves can pass a test and can help their future students pass a test.

Just like the small grains of sand that may still remain in my car from the days of my youth, the sands of teacher education and certification follow future teachers throughout their careers. Shouldn't those grains of sand remind teachers of the important work of fighting for the future of public education? Shouldn't they remind teachers to continue to fight against racist, classist, and sexist policies that exist in education? I believe they should, and if the sands of teacher education programs are going to follow all future teachers throughout their career, why not ensure that these sands remind us continually to push for critique of neoliberalism, racism, classism, sexism, and toward a more socially just future of education. My hope is that this essay will encourage current and future teachers to continue on or begin a journey of learning about critique and resistance. On the journey to becoming a critical education, we as educators can bring critique and resistance into our classrooms even if the understanding of the world may currently not be critical. I will now shift focus in chapter four to the work that teachers participate in each day in classrooms, and how it is often de-skilled and lacking such critical learning and understand that was the hope of this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

IS THIS EVEN TEACHING? NEOLIBERALISM'S ROLE IN DESKILLING TEACHERS

AND TEACHER WORK

I think everyone experiences being tired in their job. There is the tired right when your alarm goes off in the morning, the tired at 3:00 in the afternoon, and of course the 'is it the weekend yet?' tired. As an educator on the continuous journey of becoming and practicing as a critical educator, or as Apple and Au (2015) say someone who actively *bears witness to negativity*, I have been feeling a different kind of tired recently. When attempting to bear witness to the negativity, Apple and Au (2015) argue that one must "illuminate the ways in which educational policy and practice are connected to the relations of exploitation and domination -- and to struggle against such relations-- in the larger society" (p. 2). As I attempt to do this both in this dissertation and in my life as an educator each day, I experience the kind of tiredness that persists after a cup of coffee, a long night's sleep, or even after an extended break in the school year. Attempting to act as a critical educator within the neoliberal education system in the United States is a daunting and tiring task. When I reflect on why this tiredness persists, like I have not felt in the past, the only word that comes to mind for why is powerlessness. Powerlessness to attempt to avoid and resist the multitude of issues that educators experience each day. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, the issues that have been discussed thus far in this dissertation.

Personally, much of my critical education journey has been within the time of Covid-19. I spent much of quarantine reading and learning more deeply about critical issues, theories, and pedagogies. In my own experience teaching during the pandemic, I have seen both changes for the good of teacher work and teacher autonomy and for the worse. During the 2020-2021 school

year, or the first full school year during the pandemic, there was a small shift away from standardization and testing. I believe that this small change occurred because when we began the school year no one believed that we would be taking the high-stakes tests at the end of the year. Around the middle of the first semester, we were told that while the students would be required to take the high-stakes tests at the end of the year, the scores would not be counted against schools. Even this small change created more autonomy than normal in the day to day lives of teachers. While there were still pressures to teach the scripted curriculums purchased by the school board, teachers were given much more autonomy over how to meet the needs of students in their classrooms. It was a very small glimmer of hope into what teaching beyond the goals of neoliberal education reforms could look like. As I eventually saw at the end of that school year, the hope was gone by May of that year as I walked around that quiet empty classroom monitoring students taking those tests again. Any glimmer of hope was completely gone come August of the next year. In just a few short weeks we as teachers were again being hammered about the test scores that were claimed to not count. It became abundantly clear that the smallest amount of autonomy that was given the previous year would not be seen again this year. From almost the start of school the teachers in my district were onslaught with new programs, more rigid training and surveillance on the scripted curriculum that we were required to teach, and a new standardized test that our students would be required to take three times a year. Each new day of the school year felt less and less like teaching and more and more like simply a warm body needed to administer a test, put students on a computer program, or substitute in a class wherever another teacher was out due to Covid-19, because even though some like to claim we are in a *post Covid* world, we are still living in a time where a deadly virus rages. I began the year refreshed, reinvigorated, and ready to practice critical education wherever I could within my

classroom and school, but I quickly noticed the realities of neoliberalism in my day-to-day work. It also became a very present reality that this ideology works vigorously against the goals of critical education on a day-to-day basis in the work that teachers do.

As the school year progressed, I grew more and more weathered by the storm that is teaching during a pandemic, teaching in a conservative state that challenges any kind of critical learning, knowledge and understanding of the world, and teaching under the neoliberal ideology that would rather me put students on a computer or have me read a scripted lesson than teach anything that challenges systemic racism, classism, sexism, or heteronormativity. I began to experience the tiredness daily that comes with deskilling teachers and how that tiredness can spread like a wildfire throughout a classroom, school, school district, and community. hooks (2003) writes about this kind of tiredness, especially as it relates to teachers in the public school setting. She writes "it is often the public school setting where the sense of hopelessness about teaching is the most intense and widespread" (hooks, 2003, p. 15). Her words, like always, left me with a deeper understanding of how deskilling has impacted me in a way that led to such exhaustion and frustration that I felt in my own life.

As demonstrated in the first few chapters of this dissertation, the institution of public education was not created as a space for critical education to thrive. It has been shown thus far in this dissertation work the ways in which neoliberalism in the form of high-stakes testing, standardization, philanthropy in education, teacher education and certification have in fact designed public education as a space to perpetuate as well as create a multitude of inequalities and oppression. Critical educators are tasked with teaching against the very fabric of what the systems in which they teach are designed to do, and that can be very tiring work. In this chapter I want to talk a bit more about why various forms of critical education as discussed at the end of

chapter three may not be implemented as widely as they should be. I will discuss how the issues

discussed thus far in this dissertation have actual impact on the day to day work that teachers do,

how deskilling teacher work has detrimental impacts on teacher education, and how deskilling

within both of these contexts create environments that allow the feeling of powerlessness and

tiredness to persist in critical educators attempting to teach against the multitude of oppressions

created and perpetuated within the neoliberal education system.

Each of the issues discussed thus far in the previous essays have caused major issues in

the area of teacher work. The neoliberal ideology as well as the policies and initiative that it

breeds into schools works to de-skill the work of teachers (Apple, 1995; Au, 2009; Au, 2011;

Giroux, 2019; Saltman, 2013). Apple (1995) defines deskilling as "a long process in which labor

is divided and then redivided to increase productivity, to reduce 'inefficiency', and to control

both the cost and the impact of labor" (p. 129). In everyday teacher work deskilling is seen

through the increasing implementation of scripted curriculums, an over emphasis on educational

technology, and increased learning in the area of behavior management and lesson planning in

teacher education programs. With neoliberalism dictating the work that teachers are doing daily

in their classrooms, as well as top-down management styles in schools and districts,

neoliberalism also creates a loss of control and autonomy over teacher work. Teachers lose their

autonomy when the goal of education becomes passing a test. Through deskilling the knowledge

that students have to learn, it also inherently deskills the knowledge that teachers need to learn as

well.

Au (2009) writes about the role that testing has on controlling and disempowering

teachers, writing "control over teachers' identities provides some insight into why so many

teachers, as actors within bureaucratic structures, do change their pedagogies to match that of the

high-stakes tests" (p. 95). This demonstrates why critical pedagogies within the neoliberal education system is something that struggles to gain and sustain momentum. Teachers feel pressured by the tests, administration, and others at the top to conform to education practices that are this year's *proven* best way to help students to pass the test. After reading the work of Apple (1995) I gained a better understanding of my seemingly endless state of tiredness. He writes when teacher work is deskilled that teachers "become unattached individuals, divorced from both colleagues and the actual stuff of their work" (Apple, 1995, p. 134). For the past few years, I have been spending most nights and weekends learning and gaining an understanding of the intersectionality of oppressions that structural issues within our society and schools create, as well as also learning about a multitude of critical pedagogies, but then each day I have been going back into a space and system that has been created for the exact opposite reasons. I go into an environment that is devoid of critical knowledge and understanding, and the contrast between the two worlds creates exhaustion. In this essay I will delve more deeply into the role that the neoliberal ideology has on deskilling teacher knowledge and teacher work and how deskilling can impact teacher education as well. Finally, I will discuss a variety of critical pedagogies that, although may feel impossible at times, are forms of resistance to deskilling work of teacher and teacher educators.

Deskilling and Reskilling

Before moving on to discuss the aspects of deskilling teacher work that I believe not only myself, but other teachers throughout the United States feel each day in our classrooms, I feel it is important to discuss deskilling of teachers and teacher work in more detail. One of the first scholars to discuss the deskilling of teachers and teacher work is Michael Apple (1995). While a brief definition of what Apple (1995) refers to as deskilling was mentioned earlier in the chapter,

there is a need to discuss it further. Apple (1995) writes about deskilling, but also about the ways in which deskilling goes hand in hand with reskilling. Apple (1995) writes that deskilling often involves taking a complex job such as teaching, and "breaking them down into specified actions with specified results so that less skilled and costly personnel can be used, or so that the control of work pace and outcome is enhanced" (p. 129). While deskilling is the process of breaking down complex skills, reskilling is the action of then replacing those complex skills with skills and teaching techniques that pedagogically lack critique. Apple (1995) argues that the skills are "replaced by techniques for better controlling students" (p. 133), and I would add that they also allow for better control over teachers as well. The deskilling and reskilling process allows for control over the knowledge that teachers are able to learn, and to teach their students.

Personally, I feel the impacts of deskilling teacher work on a daily basis in my own school and district, and I believe it not only directly correlates with the neoliberal ideology, but also directly impacts teacher education. Deskilling of teachers correlates to the neoliberal ideology because it is directly connected to the ideologies belief that public institutions must be *efficient* in their ability to increase outputs. Another aspect relies on those public institutions, especially education, ability to be held accountable to those outputs. Apple (1995) writes about the changes to teacher work and curriculum stating that "changes in these will make schools more efficient in distributing the supposedly neutral information that these instructions must teach" (p. 54). In order to sustain itself, neoliberalism and other structural ideologies such as racism, sexism, and classism must not be discussed in the curriculum. By keeping them out of the curriculum, teachers and students are also kept from challenging these systems of intersecting oppression. Along with being connected to the neoliberal ideology as a way to perpetuate it,

deskilling also has a variety of implications on the work that is done within teacher education programs.

One scholar who talks about the role that deskilling has in teacher education is Giroux (2019). He argues "the most notable features of contemporary conservative reform efforts is the way in which they increasingly position teachers as a liability and in doing so align with modes of education that are as demeaning as they are deskilling" (Giroux, 2019, p. 40). One major implication and direct example of deskilling that occurs in schools today involves the use of scripted curriculum. These pre-packaged curriculum can have a major pedagogical impact on teacher education programs that exist within the communities that require them. Having worked with future teachers that have field experience in my own school, I have found that some teacher education programs are requiring future teachers to learn a scripted curriculum within their course work simply because the district that many of the future teachers begin teaching in implements that curriculum. This does not create a teacher education space that allows for critical pedagogies like those that were briefly discussed in chapter three and that will be discussed at the end of this chapter to thrive. Future teachers who encounter teacher educational experiences like these may ultimately end up in a similar situation as myself a few years ago, which was unable to understand my role in perpetuating inequalities.

Others who discuss the ways in which neoliberalism breeds deskilled teacher work especially as it relates to teacher education include Kumashiro (2012), Nuñez (2015), and Saltman (2013). Kumashiro (2012) discusses the teacher as a technician, writing "[c]urrent reforms are reducing what teachers need to learn about students, learning, curriculum, assessment, and educational contexts, thereby reducing their ability to understand, create, tailor, and problem-solve" (p. 49). This reduction creates teachers whose sole purpose is to implement

already created, pre-packages, and scripted curriculums. When teachers are treated as, and educated toward, simply being a technician they, like their students, are reduced to someone who is able to memorize and regurgitate what they read. Nuñez (2015) discusses specific examples of ways in which teachers are deskilled, specifically mentioning reading programs such as Reading First, Response to Intervention Initiatives, and Common Core State Standards. She writes "[t]hese examples are far from the only ways that teachers' work has become more controlled; yet, they illustrate the diversity of means through which teaching has been constrained" (Nuñez, 2015, paragraph 5). She demonstrates here that the deskilling of teachers is not just one thing, but rather deskilling is created through a multitude of compounding initiatives. Saltman (2013) writes that "teaching becomes deskilled and degraded as curriculum is not to be developed but rather delivered" (p. 68). Teachers who are subjected to simply delivering a scripted curriculum are not given the autonomy to practice a variety of forms of critical pedagogies in their classrooms and schools. They become a delivering agent in the banking model of education rather than an intellectual or change agent for the students in their classrooms (Freire, 1970). One other scholar who discusses the role that neoliberalism and deskilling can have on teacher education is Sleeter (2008). She writes that "[w]hile internal criticisms can serve to strengthen teacher education, external assaults that have their origins in global economic and political restructuring aim not only to deprofessionalize teaching by devaluing professional preparation of teachers, but also to undermine equity and democracy by restructuring education around corporate needs" (Sleeter, 2008, p. 1948). Her writing here demonstrates the role that critique and dialogue around systemic issues within teacher education can have in making these programs stronger. She also shows how deskilling and connecting teacher education to corporate goals can

have negative impacts on teacher education and education in general as a form of liberation from oppression.

The deskilling and reskilling of teacher work and teacher education go hand in hand with the neoliberal ideology within schools and teacher education. When the purpose of schooling is reduced to a number, whether that be a score on a test, grade in a class, or GPA, there is not a need for critical pedagogies and teachers because the tests, and grades do not require this kind of critical learning. When teachers in various classrooms, schools, and districts around the United States are subjected to teaching using scripted curriculums, are over-surveilled to ensure the curriculum is being taught with *fidelity*, and have an oversaturation of educational technology that they are required to use, then those teachers become deskilled. They become anti-intellectuals, and "become unattached individuals, divorced from both colleagues and the actual stuff of their work" (Apple, 1995, p. 134). Many times these past few years I have felt this detachment. I have felt this when required to sub in classes, when told my reading class will now just get on an expensive computer program and the only thing I need to do is interpret data to help them on said program. I also see this when new teachers are staying late to read 30 or more pages a night of scripted curriculum that they need to learn before teaching the next day. Deskilling the complex job of teaching and reskilling it to be a form of memorization and restating of *facts* that students are required to learn is a major implication that the neoliberal ideology is alive and well in schools, and detrimental impacts the wellbeing of teachers and teacher education.

In the remaining part of this essay, I will further discuss aspects of deskilling teachers that occur daily in many classrooms across public schools in the United States. While a more in-depth conversation on education technology will be saved for chapter six, this chapter will

discuss more in depth the issues with scripted curriculum and over surveillance. The chapter will end with a discussion on why the neoliberal ideology encourages these practices as well as a variety of forms of critical pedagogies that can be incorporated into a multitude of spaces, including teacher education, classrooms and schools to challenge the notion that a deskilled teacher and teacher work is the best option for any classroom.

<div align="center">We Don't Need you to Teach: Just Memorize this Script</div>

Neoliberal educational reforms such as high-stakes testing, standardization, and other accountability measures make the goal of education passing a test rather than critical thinking and critically understanding a variety of social justice issues in the world around us. These reforms that encourage accountability and efficiency over critical education too often encourage and lead to an overuse of scripted curriculum and a general loss of autonomy in teacher work. Apple (1995) was talking about this shift in the way that curriculum was being designed and implemented almost thirty years ago. He writes that the curriculum is "designed in such a way that students only interact with the teacher on a one-to-one level, not with each other (except during 'breaks'). The teacher 'manages' the system" (Apple, 1995, p. 29). This kind of teaching further embeds the notion that the teacher is the one who passes on the knowledge to the student. Giroux (2019) argues that "[t]hese reforms are not innocent and actually promote failure in the classroom" (p. 40). The failure that occurs is a lack of autonomy over what a teacher is able to teach, and the autonomy of students to take ownership in their learning.

One of the main ways that educators are deskilled because of these neoliberal education reforms is through the implementation of scripted curriculums. Scripted curriculums are used in the neoliberal education system because they are deemed best for helping students to pass the test. Some scholars who discuss the role that scripted curriculum plays on deskilling teacher

work include Au (2017a), Taubman (2009), Gorlewski (2013), and Saltman (2013). Au (2017a) argues that scripted curricula are used increasingly during teacher shortages because they are thought of as something anyone can deliver. I believe this has major impacts on teachers in today's context of teaching during a pandemic. When there is a teacher shortage, this kind of curriculum can be preferred because it often comes with videos that all a substitute teacher would need to do is press play for that day's lesson. Taubman (2009) compares the act of teaching scripted curriculum to that of teaching by numbers in the same way some art is presented in a paint by numbers format. Scripted curriculums reduce teaching and teacher work to something as simple as being able to follow directions and memorize information. Gorlewski (2013) and Saltman (2013) write about the ways that scripted curriculum becomes teaching that is robotic and anti-intellectual. It is robotic in the way that each lesson is taught the same way no matter which students are in the room. These curriculums are anti-intellectual in a few different ways, because their content is often whitewashed and anti-critical, but also because of the time it takes for teachers to learn and read them. Speaking as a teacher who works in a district that requires the use of scripted curriculum for all subject areas at the elementary level, these kinds of curriculum can often lead to even more exhaustion as I mentioned at the opening of this chapter. They impact the amount of time outside of school hours that a teacher can focus on learning and reading work that is not part of the reading required to learn the curriculum. A typical elementary school teacher who uses a scripted curriculum for all subject areas can be required to read up to forty or more pages a night of scripted lessons to prepare for what they will need to teach the next day. When I think about this time wasted on reading anti-critical and scripted curriculums, it reminds me of the times over the past few years when I have read 40 pages of work from critical educators mentioned in this dissertation, and to me this is time much better spent than reading

and trying to memorize forty or more pages of lessons. Reading the work of critical scholars and educators has helped me in multiple ways. They have deepened my understanding of structural issues, they have encouraged me to know that there are others like myself who know that the current ways in which we teach children are wrong, and they have inspired me to stand up for changes to issues within my own community, even if those changes are small.

Another major problem with the use of scripted curriculum is their overuse in urban areas and schools with more diverse populations. Costigan (2013) writes a study that was conducted over seven years involving graduate teacher education students in an urban education setting. He writes that a majority of these teachers, although enrolled in graduate programs, were still required to teach scripted curriculums. Costigan (2013) writes

> Sixty percent were mandated to spend at least some time in instruction teaching prepackaged scripted lessons, and of these participants, about 20% were mandated to use parts of a literacy program designed by a for-profit educational publisher. These new teachers also frequently operated under threats of punishment for noncompliance with mandated standardized test-based teaching, and these sanctions included loss of a teaching position, the withholding of tenure, or the permanent loss of a teaching license. (p. 126)

While Costigan (2013) talks about the overuse of scripted curriculums in the urban setting, he also mentions the over surveillance to ensure that the teachers are following the scripted curriculums as well, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Another scholar who writes about the overuse of scripted curriculums in diverse schools is Sleeter (2008). She writes "[d]istricts serving low-income and/or culturally diverse students tend to adopt the most controlled and scripted curricula" (Sleeter, 2008, p. 1952). These curriculums act as an agent of

control over both teachers and students when they have the ultimate say over what and whose knowledge is deemed most important to learn. Timberlake, Burns and Barrett (2017) as well as Rigell et. al (2022) look at the role that racism and white supremacy play in these scripted curriculums. While they do not use the word meritocracy, Timberlake, Burns, and Barrell (2017) do argue that scripted curriculums that encourage *sameness* actually diminish the impacts of racism, sexism, and classism in school and on students. Rigell et. al. (2022) examine specific scripted curriculums, and they argue that whiteness is at the center of these curriculums. While Loewen (2018) is more discussing textbooks rather than scripted curriculums, he also argues that textbooks often offer a whitewashed and classless version of history. Each of these examples show how scripted curriculums are designed to teach the students in the classrooms and districts that implement them, that the knowledge that is acceptable and important to be learned is that of white, middle-class values. Not only do these curriculums demonstrate whose knowledge is accepted as truth, but they also show whose voices are acceptable to be left out. Those most left out include voices and stories of people of color, people of lower socio-economic status, people who do not identify within the gender binary, and many more.

Going beyond just the overuse of these forms of curriculum in diverse settings, Sleeter (2008) also talks about the impact that these curriculums, and district's strict adherence to them, can have on teacher education programs. She writes specifically about the role of student teaching and field placement experiences. Sleeter (2008) writes that "it is increasingly difficult to find classroom field placements serving low-income students that model anything except scripted teaching" (p. 1952). This creates a major problem for sites of teacher education that are attempting to teach future teachers about critical pedagogies, because the theories are unable to be practiced in actual classrooms. Beal (2018) demonstrates one such teacher education problem

that seems to teach future teachers the ability to create their own scripted lesson plans. The study

shows how teacher candidates in a teacher education course in a university in the state of

Georgia are told which assessments to use, given a standard to teach, and then asked to create a

lesson plan in which they will need to "note step by step what they and their students will do

during instructional time" (Beal, 2018, p. 36). The future teachers are then graded on a rubric for

how well they followed directions to create the procedures for the lesson. This kind of

assignment in teacher education is devoid of critical understanding and demonstrates how

teacher education programs are being reduced to lesson planning while also engaging future

teachers in learning how to teach using scripted curriculums with prescribed student outcomes

and statements. I also believe that it further entrenches the ideas of whiteness and middle/upper

classism as many of the teachers performing these tasks are creating student responses that will

probably correlate with their own experience which more often than not comes from white and

middle-class backgrounds.

Scripted curriculums are one aspect of neoliberal education reforms that work to deskill

teacher work, deskill teacher education as spaces where critical pedagogies and theories can be

taught and implemented, and deskill students to desired output of statements they should say

during the lesson or tests scores on skills they should be able to master after the lessons. Salman

and Means (2015) argue that these teacher proof curriculums are "held up as objective and

supposedly progressive responses to longstanding educational failures" (paragraph 16). Again,

this reminds us of the neoliberal logic that in order to continue to make profits off of public

education, the system needs to be able to create spaces where *failure* exists as a way to swoop in

and attempt to save the day again. These scripted curriculums were not designed to help

culturally diverse students to pass a test, but were rather implemented as extensions of control

over teachers required to teach with them, teacher education programs having to compete with them, and culturally diverse students required to learn from them. The next section of this essay will discuss the reason why more teachers in public school settings are not attempting to resist these types of scripted curriculums that ultimately deskill their work, and that is the over surveillance of teachers and students.

<div align="center">We'll be Watching: Over Surveillance of Teachers and their Students</div>

The adoption and implementation of scripted curriculums by schools and districts alone would not create as big of a problem as they have if not for over surveillance. Many teachers, especially those teachers who have a critical understanding of their overtly racist, classist, and sexist nature would surely not implement scripted curriculums in their classrooms every day if they were not a requirement tracked through teacher observations and evaluations. The problem arises when teachers are required to implement them, and over surveilled to ensure they are implemented with *fidelity*. Teacher evaluations, observations, and an overuse of technology and policing in schools has turned many schools, especially those schools with larger populations of students of color, into spaces where both the teachers and the students are over surveilled to conform to practices that are marginalizing. Foucault (1975) writes about the architectural structure of the panopticon. While he was specifically referring to this structure's use in prisons, similar apparatuses of control occur in schools. He argues that "this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves are bearers" (Foucault, 1975, p. 201). In essence, the aspects of teaching that uphold power imbalances, and keep teachers from practicing pedagogies that are liberating, are put in place to ensure that even without someone being in a teacher's classroom on a daily basis,

teachers are still led to believe that if they break the rule there will be consequences. Contracts that require the teaching of only the curriculum bought by the district as well as teacher evaluations that are tied to the implementation of those scripted curricula create a system of permanent feelings of control. Foucault (1975) writes that systems such as these "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (p. 201). Although teachers may not be watched in their classroom each day, the forces of control continue to keep teachers from teaching in critical ways, due to fear of loss of job, and in some states even legal punishments. Especially in those states, one such being Georgia, that have written and passed even more strict laws against Critical Race Theory and LGBTQ+ conversations and content in classrooms.

Another scholar who discusses the role that neoliberal control plays in schools is Lipman (2011). She argues that accountability as an extension of neoliberal education reforms act as a form of surveillance. She writes "[f]or teachers, high stakes accountability as a mechanism of surveillance is taking a toll in increased stress, demoralization, and exit from the profession" (Lipman, 2011, p. 128). Requiring teachers to teach scripted curriculum and to follow other accountability measures are detrimental to the future of teacher work, teacher education, and public education in general. Along with her critique of accountability as surveillance for teachers, Lipman (2011) also discusses how over surveillance can be detrimental to students as well. She argues that surveillance on students occurs through policing in schools. She writes that in order to "manage the social contradiction produced by neoliberalism, the state intensifies surveillance, punishment, and incarceration to maintain order in society" (Lipman, 2011, p. 14). The neoliberal ideology that subscribes to the idea that the only reason that students should be in school is to listen, memorize, and take a test directly impacts those students who do not conform.

In the words of Foucault (1975), students are required to become *docile bodies*. If and when students choose to not conform, they are punished. Foucault (1975) writes "[a] body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (p. 136). Students are expected to listen, follow directions, follow rules, and be unassertive in their own learning. I believe over surveillance not only creates students who become docile bodies, but teachers who are as well.

One other scholar who discusses the role that surveillance plays on students, especially as it relates to policing in schools, is Monahan (2009). He argues that increased surveillance creates student identities that are either victim or criminal, while also linking surveillance culture in schools to the disproportionate control of students and people of color. He writes "surveillance systems operate as extensions of the neoliberal state, carving out new markets of high-tech companies and integrating police function into the social worlds of public education" (Monahan, 2009, p. 124). Under neoliberalism in schooling, corporations are given the ability to control what our students learn, how our teachers teach, and also control how both student and teacher bodies are allowed to occupy the spaces of schooling as well. I believe that scripted curriculums and over surveillance act in compounding ways that allow for neoliberalism to take deeper root in the daily lives of teachers and students in schools. Understanding that both scripted curriculum and over surveillance of teachers and students is harmful to both identities, the question I ask myself is why do we continue these practices, and who continues to make and benefit from the decisions to incorporate these practices in our schools?

Why Can't I just Teach?: What are they so Afraid of?

The question of why can't I just teach, or a variation of it, is something that most teachers, especially those who are subjected to teaching scripted curriculum, ask themselves quite often. I will attempt to answer that question in this section. I have discussed thus far in the

chapter the role that neoliberalism has had on teachers in the classroom through aspects of deskilling teacher work. Two of the main issues that I have discussed in regards to deskilling teacher work are scripted curriculums and over surveillance of both teachers and their students. What I would like to shift my conversation to at this point is why deskilling of teacher work has occurred, and much of the answer lies in their ability to continue to perpetuate neoliberalism and other forms of oppression in schools. Deskilling of teacher work through scripted curriculum, high-stakes testing, and over surveillance occur in school as ways to maintain structural realities of ideologies such as neoliberalism, racism, sexism, and classism. Some of the reasons why these issues occur is because they entrench other ideas of control. Those ideas being: control through ideological management, a lack of trust in teachers and too much trust in technology, and the gender issue of teaching being seen as care work.

Ideological Management

The first issue that I want to discuss is that of ideological management. Spring (2008) argues that ideological management is the way in which schools redistribute a certain type of knowledge. He writes that "[s]chools play a central role in the distribution of particular knowledge in a society" (Spring, 2008, p. 5). Schools, standards, high-stakes tests, and scripted curriculums control the knowledge of an entire population, and in today's society that knowledge is based mostly on the information needed to pass a standardized test. That knowledge needed to pass a test is not a critical understanding of deeper structural and social justice issues. The role of ideological management as a reason for deskilling teacher work is that it allows for the continuation of the structures that create an intersectionality of oppression to remain intact. When schools control the knowledge that is learned, these structures go unquestioned, unchallenged, and ultimately unchanged.

Another scholar who discussed the role that ideological management plays in perpetuating neoliberalism and racism through deskilling of teacher work is Watkins (2011). He argues that ideological management, or the control of whose knowledge is valued in schools, has deep connections to the neoliberal ideology. He writes "[a]s the venue of policymaking shifts from education 'experts' to corporate people, we can expect the objectives of the new technocracy to play a crucial part in the new' educational system" (Watkins, 2011, p. 29). As corporations and private entities gain more and more control over what knowledge and whose knowledge is taught in schools, we as educators need to understand these impacts on the work, we do on a day-to-day basis. He also argues that neoliberalism "also demands ideological universalism cloaked by sham democracy" (Watkins, 2011, p. 14). Technology corporations and private corporations continue to gain more and more control over education within the neoliberal education system, and that control is another reason for the role that dekilling plays in teacher work.

This Computer can Teach them Better than You

Yet another reason for why teacher work is deskilled is the connection of the neoliberal ideology to the profit that corporations, especially tech corporations, gain from the industry of schooling. As was mentioned in both chapter two and three of this dissertation, *A Nation at Risk* brought about a lot of changes in the role of regulation within public education. This document brought with it a deep lack of trust in teachers and that lack of trust has continued today. As we have entered the digital age, the lack of trust in teachers has gone hand in hand with too much trust in educational technology as a way to teach students. While I will speak more about educational technology in chapter six of this dissertation when discussing the role that commodification has had in education, I do believe it is important to briefly note here as well

because of the role that technology in schools has had on deskilling of teacher work, its connection to neoliberalism, and its control of what and whose knowledge is being taught in schools. Gorlewski and Tuck (2019) write about the over saturation of educational technology that is available. Saltman (2020) discusses the role of educational technology, specifically a rise in the use of artificial technology in schools. He argues that "for-profit corporations have shifted ownership, design and control of curriculum and pedagogical practice from teachers to business" (Saltman, 2020, p. 198). He also discusses the role that the control of student bodies plays in the increase in technology usage in schools writing that the "neo-liberal era relies less and less on disciplinary power – that is, learned self-regulation – and more and more on direct control of bodies" (Saltman, 2020, p. 204). When students are forced to sit behind a computer screen in order to learn, and teachers are forced to simply ensure that the students remain on those computers, this acts as a new form of control over teacher and student bodies. This control is significant to the perpetuation of power imbalances, because it indoctrinates students and teachers to believe that the purpose of schooling and work is to follow directions, sit still, and listen.

Two other scholars who discuss the role that technology plays in deskilling teacher work as a form of control are Apple and Jungck (1990). They argue that "[a]s employees lose control over their own labor, the skills that they have developed over the years atrophy. They are slowly lost, thereby making it even easier for management to control even more of one's job because the skills of planning and controlling it yourself are no longer available" (Apple & Jungck, 1990, p. 230). Each of these scholars demonstrate the ways in which a lack of trust in teachers and too much trust in technology plays an important role in deskilling teachers as a form of control. Overtrust in technology and under trusting teachers creates a control over both the knowledge

production and the bodies of students and teachers. They also allow for corporations and private

entities to gain more and more control over public education, and profits from public education.

One other aspect of Apple and Jungck's (1990) argument is that the overuse of technology in

classrooms occurs because teaching is a field that is made up predominantly of women. Treating

teaching as care work is another reason for why teaching has been subjected to deskilling in the

way that it has. Care work was briefly defined in the first chapter of this dissertation as any form

of work, whether paid or unpaid, that involves the care of others, and because women too often

bear the burden of this kind of work, it is seen as having less value than other forms of work.

This idea will be explicated further in the next section of this chapter.

Are you saying you don't care? I thought you did this for the kids

Along with controlling society through ideological management, an overtrust in

corporations and technology, teaching as care work is yet another reason why teaching as a

profession is subjected to deskilling work. Teachers are subjected to the deskilling of the

profession because teaching is often thought of as care work. Many scholars discuss the role of

care work and unpaid care work are gender specific issues that directly and disproportionately

impact women (Brown, 2015; Fraser, 1985; Marphatia & Moussié, 2013). Fraser (1985) and

Marphatia and Moussié (2013) argue that care work is work predominantly required by women

to do within the private sphere of the family, because traditionally caring has been taught as an

inherent trait for women. While this is not true, it creates issues for many women teachers

because we are told that our job is a caring job, and that we are doing it because we care about

our students. Apple and Jungck (1990) describe the phenomenon of all kinds of work, not just

teaching, that is done mostly by women as being overly subjected to deskilling. They write

"[w]omen's work has been particularly subject to the deskilling and depowering tendencies of

management" (Apple & Jungck, 1990, p. 230). Another scholar who notes the issue of teaching being deskilled or reduced to care work is Freire (1998). He argues against deskilling writing, "one should never reduce teaching to merely a feel-good process, particularly to a paternalistic nurturing that takes the form of parental coddling" (Freire, 1998, p. 6). Each of these scholars demonstrates the ways in which deskilling of teacher work is an issue of gender and systemic sexism as it relates to work that is considered *feminine* or *masculine*.

Another scholar who I believe does a great job of connecting the gender issue of care work to neoliberalism is Brown (2015). She is able to show how the ideologies of neoliberalism and sexism intersect to impact the work that teachers do, specifically women teachers. Brown (2015) writes

> As provisioners of care for others in households, neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces, women disproportionately remain the invisible infrastructure for all developing, mature, and worn-out human capital—children, adults, disabled, and elderly. Generally uncoerced, yet essential, this provision and responsibility get theoretically and ideologically tucked into what are assumed as preferences issuing naturally from sexual difference, especially from women's distinct contribution to biological reproduction. It is formulated, in short, as an effect of nature, not of power. (p. 105)

The idea that women are naturally more caring and therefore should perform skills such as teaching because they care and not because they are a professional is harmful to the profession, and how deskilling teacher work acts as a form of control over women. I want to note here briefly that teaching as care work is not only harmful to women, but it also impacts men who become teachers as well. Men are taught that they are not as capable of

care work as women, because they are less capable of emotions and feelings. This is especially telling by the lack of elementary level teachers who are men.

Teachers, especially women teachers, are indoctrinated to believe that just because we care about our students, we should just follow the rules and do as we are told. I believe that teachers can care for their students while also resisting the forms of control that we are subjected to, whether that be scripted curriculums, overuse of technology, or over surveillance. Gay (2010) discusses culturally responsive care as being this kind of care. She writes "teachers who really care for students honor their humanity, hold them in high esteem, expect high performance from them, and use strategies to fulfill their expectations" (Gay, 2010, p. 59). I believe that teachers, especially critical teachers and educators must be able to care in this way. They must be able to fight their fears and implement a variety of critical pedagogies as forms of resistance to dominant ideologies of control.

I am Going to Just Teach: Critical Pedagogies as Resistance to Deskilling

Thus far in this chapter aspects of deskilling teacher work such as scripted curriculums and surveillance has been discussed as well as the deeper-rooted reasons for why these things occur in schools as forms of control has been discussed as well. The remaining part of this chapter will discuss in more detail the role that different critical pedagogies can have in breaking those systems of control. I will also discuss how we as teachers can overcome the fear of resistance to incorporate these into our classrooms even though we are over-surveilled and too often restricted to deskilling work. I believe by incorporating these critical pedagogies into teacher education, teacher's classrooms, and in general conversations among peers, we as

teachers can create a better future for our field. A future where social justice, and not the neoliberal agenda, is at the forefront of the work that we do each day.

I want to start by discussing what I mean by critical pedagogy. As discussed in chapter one of this dissertation, critical pedagogy as popularized by scholars such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren has been critiqued by many feminist and critical race feminists as not going far enough. These scholars argued that critical pedagogy in the 1980s began as a way to understand systems of oppression, but often did not focus enough on transforming those systems of oppression. I believe that a multitude of critical pedagogies can have a role in resistance to systems of oppression in schooling, but in order for the resistance to be transformative to these systems, we as teachers must understand and use a variety of them. Just as oppression comes in intersecting forms, so can our pedagogies act in resistance to these forms of oppression. Therefore, the definition of critical pedagogy that this dissertation will rely on connects most to the definition given by Liston and Rahimi (2017) which is "an umbrella term to encompass a variety of theoretical perspectives that encourage learners (both students and teachers are learners in the context of [scholarship of teaching and learning]) to think critically" (p. xvii). Some of the suggestions I make that should encompass critical pedagogy are: culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), ecojustice (Bowers, 2014), sexuality curriculum (Rahimi & Liston, 2012), critical media literacy (Leistyna & Alper, 2006), pop culture pedagogy (Maudlin & Sandlin, 2015), inclusive curriculum (Sapon-Shevin, 2015), land education (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014), and antioppressive pedagogy (Kumashiro, 2002). Each of these different forms of critical pedagogies leads to a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of oppression that ourselves and our students experience both in schools and in the world around. I also want to note that this is not a definitive

list, and more critical pedagogies can be added as needed for the goals of the parents, students, and communities in which we teach see fit, so long as the goal is for a transformation of systems of oppression. I feel like each of the pedagogies above is important for teachers who want to transform systems of oppression to learn about and incorporate into their classrooms. I believe each of these to be significant because they shed light on social justice issues involving structural issues of racism, sexism, classism, and neoliberalism in schools.

Giroux (2016) writes that "[t]eachers must be viewed as public intellectuals and a valuable social resource, and the conditions of their labor and autonomy must be protected" (p. 358). I believe each of these forms of critical pedagogy can create more autonomy over teacher work and help to create teachers that are able to be social resources for their students, fellow teachers, parents, and communities. Each of the pedagogies above work to create an understanding of the world for both teacher, teacher educators, and their students to understand and create forms of resistance against systemic issues. Culturally relevant pedagogy was discussed briefly at the end of chapter three in this dissertation, but I want to discuss it again in terms of how it can work to transform teaching and schooling away from deskilling and toward schooling that is more socially just. One aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy that makes it important in regards to control discussed in this chapter is its role in overcoming ideological management. Ladson-Billings (1995) writes in her study of culturally relevant pedagogy that it "represents a beginning look at ways that teachers might systematically include student culture in the classroom as authorized or official knowledge" (p. 483). This is very significant when attempting to overcome the ideological management that occurs through schooling and scripted curriculums that control what and whose knowledge is taught as important. Culturally responsive teaching is another form of critical pedagogy that works to create classroom spaces that are

liberating for students of color. Gay (2010) writes that culturally responsive teaching, and believe it "is a means for unleashing the higher learning potentials of ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their academic and psychosocial abilities" (p. 21). Some aspects of this pedagogy include culturally responsive caring, understanding the relationship between culture and communication, the use of culturally diverse curriculum, and implementing the use of diverse teaching styles that match diverse learning styles. The aspects of culturally responsive teaching that make it liberating is that it connects to resisting ideological management because it requires the use of diverse curriculums, which is the opposite of what scripted curriculums provide. Land education (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014) is another culturally affirming form of pedagogy, specifically related to place based education and Indigenous communities and students. Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy (2014) write that land education and place based education addresses "the contexts of settler colonialism, the conditions and diversely articulated aims of decolonization, and the epistemologically and ontologically distinct understandings of land lived by Indigenous peoples" (p. 14). This form of pedagogy centers the Indigenous perspective in relation to colonization and its impacts on schools and schooling. Each of these pedagogies can create classroom spaces that are aware of and affirming diverse cultural backgrounds, and they act in resistance to ideological management that says only one kind of knowledge is important.

Other areas of critical pedagogies can center around issues in schooling related to LGBTQ+ students, gender diverse students, or neurodivergent students and students with disabilities. Sapon-Shevin (2015) writes that disabilities are, like race and gender, a social construct, and that they can add to the intersectionality of oppression that a person experiences in schooling specifically and life in general. Sapon-Shevin (2015) writes that the term inclusive

education can "address providing education in ways that recognize, honor, and respond to differences in race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, and family configuration" (Paragraph 15). Another aspect of inclusive education as Sapon-Shevin (2015) describes it is that it is transformative and not additive, meaning that it requires that students and teachers have both the understanding of a multitude of oppression, but also the skill to call out and change the systems that uphold these forms of oppression. Antioppressive pedagogy and activism as described by Kumashiro (2002) is another form of transformative critical pedagogy. Kumashiro (2002) writes about antioppressive pedagogy and antioppressive activism as it relates to youth and individuals who identify as queer. He also connects the use, and nonuse, of antioppresive pedagogy to control. He writes "attempts to control education can actually hinder antioppresive change" (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 8). In this work Kumashiro (2002) describes what safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students, parents, and teachers might look like. Rahimi and Liston (2012) also discuss LGBTQ+ and other gender issues as it pertains to curriculum, as they discuss the use of a sexuality curriculum. They write about a need for a sexuality curriculum in schools that is inclusive, balanced, non-sexist, and relevant (Rahimi & Liston, 2012, p. 178-179). A curriculum like this would give students a voice in schools and allow for the school to become a place where students do not go to simply listen and follow directions, but to know that they have a voice in advocating for themselves. Each of these forms of critical pedagogies create inclusive spaces when students are given a voice and ability to help teachers, parents, and administrators in creating inclusive and transformative spaces within the school walls. These forms of critical pedagogy would be imperative in overcoming the control of care work as less than. If we as teachers are supposed to care, then we should be allowed to care in ways that affirm all kinds of student identities and not just those affirmed by scripted curriculum.

The last forms of critical pedagogies that will be discussed in this chapter relate to learning within the digital age. These are important because as technology and big tech corporations take over even more control of schools, it is important that both teachers and their students are equipped with critical forms of pedagogy that allow them the ability to critique the growing role that technology plays in our schools. Leistyna and Alper (2006) write about the role that critical media literacy can play in teaching people to have the ability to critique the media, specifically in regards to how it can be used to portray negative stereotypes. They argue "critical media literacy is rooted in a democratic project that emphasizes new theories and languages of critique, resistance, and possibility capable of engaging the oppressive social practices that maintain the de facto social code in the United States" (Leistyna & Alper, 2006, p. 517). For teachers, this is an especially important form of critical pedagogy to possess, because without the ability to critique negative stereotypes in the media, teachers may in turn push those stereotypes onto their students. Another form of critical pedagogy that critiques the role that the media and other forms of digital technologies play is pop culture pedagogy (Maudlin & Sandlin, 2015). They believe that studying pop culture, in all its forms, "helps us understand and perhaps intervene in how we, through our interactions with popular culture, produces, reproduces, and reimagines social life and everyday social practices and relations" (Maudlin & Sandlin, 2015, p. 369). This is relevant when looking at the underlying issue of deskilling that involves too much trust in technology. Educators who are able to critique the issues of power that are perpetuated through pop culture, as well as are able to help their students understand these issues are important. One final form of pedagogy that can be important when critiquing the role that digital technologies have in perpetuating inequalities is Bowers (2014) idea of ecojustice. Bowers (2014) writes about the harmful role that digital technologies can play in society. He writes that

ecojustice "includes the awareness that social justice issues cannot be separated from what is happening to natural systems" (Bowers, 2014, p. 38). The damaging role that digital technology and technology corporations can play on local ecologies and cultures is important for both teachers and their students to understand.

Each of these critical forms of pedagogies discussed in this chapter, again not being an exhaustive or definitive list but rather a starting point for current educators and future educators to begin learning about and using in their classroom, are important. While I believe they are important, I also know firsthand the effects that deskilling and over surveillance can play in the lives of critical educators. Acting and teaching in resistance to dominant ideologies such as neoliberalism, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and heteronormativity can create a lot of fear in teachers, especially those like myself who are new to the critical education journey and often feel alone. The later part of this essay talks about this fear and how to attempt to overcome it.

Fighting the Fear: Daring to Dream and Act Differently

Each of the critical pedagogies described in this essay and other essays in this dissertation are important. Each is significantly more liberating than traditional education models that public schools rely on including scripted curriculum, using technology programs to teach, and reducing students to numbers through data and testing. This essay has also pointed out the deep-rooted role that control plays in making sure that teachers do not act in resistance. Along with control, I believe one aspect of why these forms of critical pedagogy do not take more roots in schools is an overwhelming sense of fear. I know that I experience this fear. The fear of losing one's job, the fear that I may be the only person in my school that believes in critical forms of education, and the fear of standing up to peers and colleagues to call out oppression in all of its forms in schools is scary. Even though it is scary, we must fight that fear. I have started to ask myself this

question more often, and it is how can I fight this fear of stepping up, talking back, and working to transform systems of oppression even if it is just in my own classroom, school, and community. Apple (1995) writes that "[w]e need somehow to give life to the resistances, the struggles" (p. 146). Giving life to the resistance is a daily challenge, and going back to the opening of this essay, can lead to exhaustion, but is still important. Apple and Beane (2007) write about educators who have chosen to do this kind of work within the democratic schools they teach in. They write that these educators have "decided to devote their lives as educators to engaging in educational activity organized around democratic social and pedagogic principles in which they strongly believe. In other words, they have chosen to be exhausted as a result of something worthwhile" (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 153). Even though exhaustion may go hand in hand with critical education within the neoliberal public education system, they may also ultimately create changes for the better within those systems, and that hope is important.

Some of the ways that we as educators can fight the fear is by finding others who believe in critical education, becoming more vocal in talking back, and starting small. One way that we as critical educators can fight the fear is by finding others who have an understanding, or are willing to learn about and gain an understanding of structural issues in society. This can be challenging, but it can start with conversations at lunch or happy hour. Another way to find those people is by becoming more vocal about issues within your own district. Join a committee where you can discuss issues with the scripted curriculums and over testing in your district. We can also overcome the fear by starting small. Start with a conversation with a colleague about critical education, or incorporating books and literature that discuss social justice issues in the classroom. Start with anything that can make you feel more confident in making bigger steps toward transforming your classroom, school, district, or community into spaces that are

liberating rather than more oppressive. I list these ways to fight the fear because I need to be reminded of them myself, because by naming my suffering, or fears, I am able to work to overcome them.

CHAPTER 5

MERELY SCRATCHING THE SURFACE: THE IMPACTS OF NEOLIBERAL

MULTICULTURALISM ON HIGHER, TEACHER, AND K-12 EDUCATION

After discussing a variety of different critical pedagogies at the end of the last chapter, I

am reminded of my initial question and anger at my previous teacher education experiences.

Could each of my previous teacher education experiences really be this wrong? How is it that I

have gone a decade into my teaching career without understanding the role that structural issues

in society play in schools? When I think back on these experiences, I am reminded that they were

not devoid of conversations around diversity or multiculturalism, but yet the conversations and

learning never went beyond a surface level understanding that diversity should be embraced and

included, with no real discussion of how to do that. These programs added just enough diversity

and multiculturalism into the curriculum and content to say they were discussed without going

deeper than the surface. There are many scholars who discuss the role that teacher education

programs can play in creating future teachers who have a superficial or surface level

understanding of diversity (Fox & Diaz-Greenberg, 2006; Hinojosa Pareja & López López,

2018; Nhanga, 2015; Reiter & Davis, 2011; Tinkler & Tinkler, 2016). I believe that myself, and

many of my peers in education, encountered and experienced teacher education programs just

like the ones in these studies. Teacher education programs that leave future teachers with a

superficial understanding of both diversity and structural issues such as racism, sexism, and

classism. They especially left out conversations around how schools can perpetuate these

structural realities and negative stereotypes about diverse students, parents, and communities.

Much of my discussion on neoliberalism thus far has been around the impacts that the

ideology has on day-to-day teacher and teacher educators work through neoliberal education

reforms that rely on accountability and efficiency rather than critical thinking and understanding of the world. This chapter will discuss the role that neoliberalism has had in impacting higher education spaces as well. While the spaces of K-12 learning and higher education can often seem like two completely different entities they have many similarities in the way that neoliberalism has impacted them. Institutions of higher education, like K-12 institutions, are no stranger to the neoliberal ideology and the policies and reforms that degrade them. Lugo-Lugo (2012) writes about her own experiences in academia and describes higher education under neoliberalism as a marketplace academy. She writes "[i]n the marketplace academy, students shop for classes that suit their schedules, professors that they like, and experiences that satisfy them" (Lugo-Lugo, 2012, p. 46). While this issue will be discussed further in chapter six when discussing the commodification of education, it is important to briefly note here, because higher education is now seen as a place where a degree is bought rather than a place where knowledge is gained. Brown (2015) also discusses the ways in which neoliberalism has impacted higher education. She specifically discussed the negative impact that neoliberalism has had on higher education's ability to sustain a liberal arts education. Brown (2015) writes "discernment, and orientation are what a university liberal arts education has long promised and what are severely challenged by neoliberal rationality inside and outside universities" (p. 200). When higher education is turned into a space where critical thinking is no longer the objective, but rather a space where degrees are thought of as bought, implementing critical forms of pedagogy can be much more challenging. It also creates difficulty in teaching and learning about structural issues and in general the goals of a liberal arts education are degraded.

Neoliberalism in this way has created and perpetuated issues of teaching and learning about multiculturalism and diversity. If a corporation, philanthropist, or the university itself is

unable to make money from it, then it is not deemed as important to learn. This leads to an overuse of forms of neoliberal multiculturalism, or diversity in the name of profits. It is a contradiction that reduces diversity to something that can be sold in order to make a profit. This essay will discuss neoliberal multiculturalism, why it has been popularized, and the impact that neoliberal multiculturalism has played in higher education, teacher education, and students. Finally, the chapter will conclude again with forms of resistance to neoliberal multiculturalism, or ways that teacher educators, and teachers can move beyond a surface level understanding of issues of diversity and toward pedagogies and practices that are able to transform systems of oppression.

<div style="text-align: center;">Defining Multicultural Education and Neoliberal Multiculturalism</div>

I would like to start this chapter with explaining further the definitions of what multicultural education and neoliberal multiculturalism is. In defining both, it will show how one can be liberating and affirming for teachers, students, parents, and communities, while the other works to make a profit off of surface level understanding of diversity. Banks (2014) writes extensively about multicultural education. He defines it as a form of education that "incorporates the idea that all students—regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school" (Banks, 2014, p. 1). More than just the idea that all students should be given the opportunity to learn in schools, Banks (2014) goes on to describe and define the qualities of both teachers and schools that reflect the ideals of multicultural education. He writes that multicultural education is meant to restructure and reconceptualize schools to be more empowering for all students, and not just those from dominant cultures. With the goal of multicultural education being affirmative, empowering, and transformative teaching for all students, it can be difficult to imagine any

teacher, school, or district being against this. The unfortunate reality is that school, teachers, and teacher education programs can practice forms of multicultural education that are as Banks (2014) calls them contributive and additive approaches to multicultural education rather than transformative. Contributive refers to approaches to multicultural education that rely on discussing cultural holidays, events, and foods, and the additive approach as when "cultural content, concepts, and themes are added to the curriculum without changing its basic structure, purposes, and characteristics" (Banks, 2014, p. 53). Multicultural education done well is education that is transformative, in that students are able to think critically and ultimately become agents of social change within their communities.

Like I stated, it would be a rare occurrence to find a teacher that would be against the goal and definition of multicultural education that is given by Banks (2014). The problem arises when too many teacher education programs, teacher professional learning, and other ways that further and current teachers are given opportunities to learn about multiculturalism and multicultural education relies on the contributive and additive approaches. This leads me into the conversation about the role that neoliberal multiculturalism has begun to play in the way that higher education in general and teacher education specifically has been practicing and teaching about multiculturalism and diversity issues. Case and Ngo (2017) refer to neoliberal multiculturalism as *sellable* multiculturalism, meaning that it has to be something that the university, or the corporations that are teaching about multiculturalism can profit off of. They also argue that programs such as these become more *sellable* when they are "less discomforting for White people" (Case & Ngo, 2017, p. 215). Neoliberal multiculturalism's connection to upholding white supremacy will be discussed further in the next section, but it is important to

note here because it is a major reason for why it has become so widely used in a multitude of spaces that claim to be teaching and implementing multicultural education.

Others who describe neoliberal multiculturalism are Melamed (2006) and Darder (2012). Melamed (2006) writes "[n]eoliberal policy engenders new racial subjects, as it creates and distinguishes between newly privileged and stigmatized collectivities, yet multiculturalism codes the wealth, mobility, and political power of neoliberalism's beneficiaries" (p. 1). She demonstrates here the connection that racism and neoliberalism have to one another and how they are able to work in tandem through the implementation of neoliberal multiculturalism. Darder (2012) writes that when neoliberal multiculturalism is implemented, it enacts a "structure of public recognition, acknowledgement and acceptance of multicultural subjects, based on an ethos of self-reliance, individualism, and competition, while simultaneously (and conveniently) undermining discourses and social practices that call for collective social action and fundamental structural change" (p. 417). Multicultural education that should be transformative to systems of oppression and power become simply surface level understanding of differences and diversity through the use of neoliberal multiculturalism.

These two scholars also both argue that teacher education programs and institutions of higher education have neoliberal multiculturalism ingrained in them (Darder, 2012; Melamed, 2006). The reason that neoliberal multiculturalism is able to spread within higher education settings is because university presidents and others believe that for diversity initiatives to be successful, they have to be sellable to white students (Case & Ngo, 2017). Mayorga and Picower (2018) argue that "[n]eoliberal multiculturalism ties together calls for civil rights and inclusivity, personal responsibility, and race-evasive discourses that ignore racial difference and histories of racial oppression" (p. 218). This kind of understanding of diversity and multicultural education is

harmful to teachers, students, parents and communities. It is also detrimental to spaces of teacher education when much of the teaching population is white, while the students that will be in their classrooms are increasingly becoming more diverse. When teachers enter classrooms, schools, districts, and communities with superficial, surface level, and sellable understanding of multiculturalism, it leads to major misunderstandings of the diverse needs of students in the classroom including perpetuating negative stereotypes, misconceptions, and inaccurate understanding of diverse students, families, and communities. When looking at the two forms of multicultural education, it is clear that one is transformative while the other pretends to be while upholding the systems of oppression of racism and neoliberalism. I want to move into a further discussion on why neoliberal multiculturalism is implemented on such a wide scale within multiple spaces of education.

<div align="center">Impacts of Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Multiple Spaces</div>

Now that I have briefly defined both multicultural education and neoliberal multiculturalism, I believe it is important to note the impacts that neoliberal multiculturalism can have on education within a variety of spaces. It was noted that neoliberal multiculturalism can lead to both a superficial understanding of multiculturalism and diversity, as well as it is also multicultural education that can be *sellable* or make a profit. When multiculturalism and diversity are kept at a surface level understanding, or as Banks (2014) refers to as contributive or additive approaches, it can lead to the use of and perpetuation of negative stereotypes, colorblind perspectives, and a deficit view of diverse students, parents, and communities. Some of the spaces that I find relevant to consider as both being impacted by neoliberal multiculturalism within them are higher education in general, teacher education specifically, and daily schools and classrooms in which teachers, administrators, and students interact.

Higher Education

Higher education is an important space to begin with here. It is increasingly important because it is a space more and more people are entering into at some point in their life. Brown (2015) writes about the increase in people who have been attending higher education in recent years. Because the sheer number of people attending these spaces have increased, I think it is important to talk about the ways neoliberal multiculturalism impacts them. Brown (2015; 2019) discusses extensively the impacts of neoliberalism on the higher education space. She argues that "broadly accessible and affordable higher education is one of the greatest casualties of neoliberalism's ascendance" (Brown, 2015, p. 175). When higher education and degrees are required to get and keep almost every job in society, institutions of higher education are attended by more people. Ultimately this degrades the initial goals of higher education as liberal arts, critical learning, and pursuing passions to now being no more than degree factories. As more people attend institutions of higher education, and enter the spaces indoctrinated to believe that anything that can be viewed as critique as *un-American*, the higher education institutions have to find ways to ensure that these students continue attending their schools, in order to continue profiting from them. Case and Ngo (2018) argue that diversity and multicultural education within the higher education space is uncomfortable for white people because if done well, it requires that they have an understanding of how whiteness creates privilege within structures that uphold white supremacy. Instead of implementing critical forms of education that require this kind of intellectual work, many universities avoid it because of the fear of lost income and tuition. Coddling these students to ensure that they continue to spend money to attend their university or other institutions of higher education is why neoliberal multiculturalism is implemented frequently in the higher education space.

Brown (2019) and Giroux (2019) both discuss the rise of rhetoric around anti-liberal arts and anti-intellectualism in society in recent years. I argue with them that this kind of conversation around critical learning and critique is another reason that neoliberal multiculturalism has seen success in the higher education space. Brown (2019) writes "[a] generation turned away from liberal arts education was also turned against it" (p. 6). Some fifty years ago higher education was not as accessible, and not as needed to find and hold a job. I, like many of my peers from a middle-class background, was the first in my family to graduate from an institution of higher education. Generations before were kept out of higher education and liberal arts education, and therefore also turned against it. Giroux (2019) writes about the role that anti-critical rhetoric can play in changing institutions of higher education altogether. He writes that these conversations and charges act as "an ongoing attempt to destroy higher education as a democratic public sphere that enables intellectuals to stand firm, take risks, imagine the otherwise, and push against the grain" (Giroux, 2019, p. 28). Students who have been indoctrinated, whether through the media or whitewashed and anti-critical curriculum in K-12 education, to believe that critical learning is bad, divisive, or *un-American*, can cause major resistance to multicultural education that challenges these ideas. Unlearning this indoctrination is a challenge and many students resist that challenge. This causes their institutions of higher education to implement diverse and multicultural learning that does little more than scratch the surface to understanding differences.

Teacher Education

Looking deeper into teacher education programs within the higher education space is important when discussing the impacts of neoliberal multiculturalism as well. Looking at the impact that neoliberal multiculturalism has on teacher education, it is important to consider how

this impacts the work that teacher educators do and the understanding that future teachers leave these programs with. Two of the scholars who discuss these impacts include Sleeter (2008; 2018) and McLaren (2017). McLaren (2017) discusses the role that neoliberalism has in the space of teacher education as it relates to understanding systems of oppression. He argues that in "our neoliberal economy in which the market has literally become a God, we have seen the erosion of work conditions, higher corporate profits, declining family income, and rising household debts. Public utilities have become privatized" (McLaren, 2017, p. 269). The privatization of public schooling and higher education creates many issues, one of which is that critique of neoliberalism and other structural issues can be more difficult, because these ideologies ultimately uphold these institutions. One way that McLaren (2017) argues that future teachers in teacher education programs can overcome this is by allowing space for students of privilege to understand the systems that created that privilege. He also argues that "students who have struggled and suffered throughout their lives for respect and equal opportunities and outcomes in this white supremacist, heterosexist, ableist, capitalist patriarchy, need to understand how privilege and oppression both work to commandeer a world whose social engineering is leading all of us to the brink of nuclear and environmental annihilation" (McLaren, 2017, p. 271). Neoliberal multiculturalism does not allow future teachers to do this, but rather encourages understanding of diversity that is cloaked in whiteness, individualism, and meritocracy.

Sleeter (2008; 2018) also discusses the impacts of neoliberalism on multicultural education within the teacher education space. She writes that neoliberalism in teacher education is aimed "not only to deprofessionalize teaching by devaluing professional preparation of teachers, but also to undermine equity and democracy by restructuring education around corporate needs" (Sleeter, 2008, p. 1948). This reminds us of the connection of the purpose of

schooling as the ability to pass a test, rather than creating citizens that can critique the imbalances in power in the world around them. Corporations and other private entities that control what is taught in schools, higher education, and teacher education want to maintain their power. Therefore, multicultural education that may work to transform those systems of power is not something they want discussed and learned about in these spaces. In discussing the history of multicultural education in the teacher education space, Sleeter (2018) writes about how at one point in history the learning of multicultural education expanded. She argues however "that such efforts inadvertently diluted how many people understood multicultural education" (Sleeter, 2018, p. 7). When multicultural education is implemented for profit rather than transformation, the goals of multicultural education are not achieved, and this ultimately impacts how future teachers enter classrooms and schools that have diverse families, staff, and students. The impact that this can play on both those teachers and the others who enter their schools and classrooms will be discussed next.

Schools and Classrooms

The final space that I want to address as it relates to neoliberal multiculturalism is the classroom and schools in which teachers work each day. When teachers enter into classrooms, schools, and communities with superficial understanding of diversity, or diluted understanding of multicultural education, because their institutions of higher education and teacher education programs incorporate neoliberal multiracialism, it is very detrimental. The impacts that this can have on teachers is that they enter classrooms, schools and their communities perpetuating negative stereotypes, upholding colorblind perspectives of diversity, and often discuss diverse students, parents, and communities with deficit mindsets. The first impact that neoliberal multiculturalism has on teachers, their students, and the classrooms and schools they encounter

together is that teachers have a superficial understanding or a lack of understanding of diversity (Basbay, 2014; Fox, Diaz-Greenberg, 2006; Nganga, 2015; Reiter & Davis, 2011; Tinkler & Tinkler, 2016). When teachers enter classrooms with this kind of understanding, Basbay (2014) argues that teachers have learned that just being respectful of diversity is enough. While respect is important, simply respecting differences is not the goal of multicultural education, transforming systems of oppression is. Fox and Diaz-Greenberg (2006) argue that "[t]eachers need to go beyond the mere surface level of understanding of cultural knowledge" (p. 405). Two other issues that arise when teachers enter classrooms with this kind of understanding, or the lack thereof, is that they can perpetuate colorblind perspectives and encourage deficit views of diverse students including the use of negative stereotypes.

Colorblindness refers to the idea that racism and issues involving race are non-existent today. Alexander (2012), although writing in depth about mass incarceration and not schooling specifically writes that "[t]he colorblind public consensus that prevails in America today--i.e., the widespread belief that race no longer matters--has blinded us to the realities of race in our society" (Lo. 393). Curry (2013) argues that white teachers, and especially white female teachers are "reluctant to recognize the races of other people, especially Black people" (p. 29). Colorblind perspectives lead to the opposite of affirming pedagogical practices in the classroom, and also allow for the denial of structural issues of racism in the United States. Along with colorblindness, another issue that teachers present in classrooms when they have learned multiculturalism in the way that neoliberal multiculturalism presents it is that teachers can formulate and perpetuate deficit views of diverse students (Ell et. al, 2017). Deficit perspectives can lead to a use of negative stereotypes. It may also encourage teachers to believe that students from non-dominant groups are less capable of learning. Pacheco and Gutiérrez (2009) write that

"deficit views of students have ignored children's active participation in the social and cultural activities that characterize their everyday lives" (p. 63). When teachers are unable, or unwilling, to see how curriculum, testing, and ideologies of control impact diverse students it can be detrimental to the overall wellbeing of diverse students.

When looking at each of these different spaces, whether it be higher education, teacher education, and day to day classrooms and schools, it is clear to see that neoliberal multiculturalism negatively impacts teachers, teacher educators, students, parents, and communities. Why is it that this form of multicultural education rose to popularity? The answer is its connection to the dominant ideologies of white supremacy and neoliberalism. In order to maintain control and power, these ideologies need to further entrench themselves into society, and therefore multicultural education and other forms of critical pedagogies that critique and seek to transform these systems of oppression are cast aside. Neoliberal multiculturalism's connection to neoliberalism and white supremacy as ideologies of control will be discussed further in the next section.

Beyond the Surface: Why has Neoliberal Multiculturalism Flourished

It is imperative to understand why issues such as neoliberal multiculturalism and the other issues that teachers and teacher educators face that have been discussed in this dissertation are able to thrive as well as they have been able to. In the last chapter I discussed a variety of better pedagogy options for teachers that would allow them the ability to address and work toward overcoming issues of racism, classism, and sexism in the classroom. Why are those pedagogies not more ingrained into teacher education programs, higher education, and education? The reasons always connect to maintaining and perpetuating power and control through structural issues in society. In the case of neoliberal multiculturalism being popularized,

the reason is that it perpetuates white supremacy, racism, and neoliberalism. Deep rooted

ideologies of control such as these actively work against forms of education and pedagogy that

attempt to liberate and transform the systems created as arms of that control. Banks (2014) writes

about these forms of control as it relates to being able to implement multicultural education

saying "the opponents of multicultural education are smoke screens for a conservative political

agenda designed not to promote the common good of the nation but to reinforce the status quo

and dominant group hegemony and to promote the interests of a small elite" (p. 52). One major

system of control that this essay will discuss is white supremacy and its connection to the

neoliberal ideology.

Many scholars discuss neoliberalism, neoliberal multiculturalism, and its connection to

upholding white supremacy (Banks, 2014; Grande & Anderson, 2017; hooks, 1989/2015; Lewis

& Shah, 2019; Saltman, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2018). Banks (2014) argues that critics of

multicultural education claim that this form of education is only for the *other*. He writes

"[d]espite everything written and spoken about multicultural education being for all students, the

image of multicultural education as an entitlement program for the 'others' remains strong and

vivid in the public imagination as well as in the hearts and minds of many teachers and

administrators" (Banks, 2014, p. 10). This is a damaging understanding that upholds the idea that

white students, teachers, administrators do not need to learn about multicultural education. hooks

(1989/2015) argues that one major problem is the role that teaching history plays in upholding

white supremacist thinking. She believes that in order to teach history differently we must teach

about white supremacy. Lewis and Shah (2019) write about the context of how Black students at

the university level experience diversity initiatives and they argue that whiteness and white

supremacy is embedded into the higher education experience. Saltman (2018) demonstrates a

great connection between neoliberalism and upholding white supremacy when discussing the role that individualism plays in upholding systemic ideologies. He writes that aspects of some multicultural and diversity initiatives such as privileged checking are "an individual response to a public problem" (Saltman, 2018, p. 404). White supremacy and neoliberalism are public and widespread issues that cannot be fixed through a single person's actions. Saltman writes that this "[p]ersonalization is in part the result of a culture of atomization fostered by neoliberal ideology in which the pursuit of self-interest has been successfully made common sense" (p. 407). By privatizing and individualizing solutions to systemic problems, these ideologies are ultimately able to be upheld.

Another aspect of upholding white supremacy that is discussed by many scholars is the role that neoliberalism has in being an extension of settler colonialism. Grande and Anderson (2017) discuss issues of colonization, white supremacy and how they connect to multicultural education as it is often taught today. They write about the history of public education and how the history is cloaked in white supremacy and colonizing language. Grande and Anderson (2017) write:

> This history is just part of the reason why the narrative of multicultural America or worse, of America as a "nation of immigrants," is one of the most pernicious lies of the settler imagination; the very turn of phrase erases the Indigenous peoples who were already here, the enslaved Africans who were forcibly transported, and the White settlers who did not come as "immigrants" (with an expectation to assimilate) but rather to stay and to colonize (p. 139).

Language that leaves out how and why the United States was founded and expanded, gives rise to the ability for white supremacy to continue to prosper. Tuck and Yang (2018) curate a

collection of essays that discuss issues in education as it relates to white supremacy and the upholding of colonizing ideas. They also discuss the role that social justice can play in transforming these systems. They write "[s]ocial justice is a way to mark a distinction from the origins and habits of almost all disciplines which emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries and are rooted in colonialism and white supremacy" (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. 5). Transforming systems of oppression that uphold white supremacy and other forms of oppression such as neoliberalism, sexism, classism, and other -isms is at the heart of social justice education. While this section has discussed the role that white supremacy and neoliberalism together play in perpetuating these forms of oppression, I also want to note here the ways in which future teachers can tend to uphold ideas of white supremacy when they enter into teacher education programs.

As mentioned in previous essays in this dissertation, the teaching field is predominantly made up of white, female, middle-class teachers, and many scholars note that they enter into teacher education programs with preconceived notions about learning about structural issues, diversity, and multiculturalism (Brown, Parsons & Worley, 2005; hooks, 2003; Liao, 2018; Neri, Lozano & Gomez, 2019; Szabo & Anderson, 2009; Wilson, 2014). Each of these scholars write about different ways in which future teachers resist forms of diversity and multicultural education, and how they are able to further entrench the ideologies of neoliberalism and white supremacy through their resistance. Neri, Lozano, and Gomez (2019) write that both current and future teachers resist learning related to culturally relevant pedagogies. Liao (2018) argues that this resistance is even stronger among future teachers in rural spaces. She argues that these teachers do not want to engage in conversations around diversity and multicultural learning. Banks (2014) may provide a reason for this resistance by some teachers writing that "[t]eachers who teach in predominantly White schools and districts often state that they do not have a

program or plan for multicultural education because they have few African American, Latino, or Asian American students" (p. 10). This ties back to the myth that diversity and multicultural learning is only for the students from non-dominant groups.

Wilson (2014) argues even further that teacher education programs that include too much theory and learning about diversity and critical issues leads to future teachers leaving or choosing different programs if they have opposing views. The issue that Wilson (2014) discusses connects to the role of neoliberal multiculturalism in teacher education because these institutions and teacher education programs are forced to compete with other programs devoid of theory and critical learning within the neoliberal market of higher education and teacher education. One main reason for not wanting to gain an understanding of structural issues is that many teachers enter programs of study and ongoing professional learning in denial that structural realities of the -isms even exist. hooks (2003) writes about her own experience in leading these kinds of trainings, stating that in "anti-racist workshops and seminars, much of the time is often spent simply breaking through the denial that leads many unenlightened white people, as well as people of color, to pretend that racist and white-supremacist thought and action are no longer pervasive in our culture" (p. 25). Systems of oppression such as white supremacy and neoliberalism are able to engrain themselves into society and are thought of as common-sense practices. Therefore, when they are confronted and critiqued as the systems of power and oppression that they are, many deny their existence altogether, because to believe in those systems means having to confront the idea that privilege exists. When students do engage in these conversations, it is noted that future teachers can tend to hide their bias (Szabo & Anderson, 2009), or they discuss issues in ways they feel their professors want them to think (Brown, Parsons, & Worley, 2005). Both of these actions by future teachers continue and further

perpetuate the ideas of white supremacy and do not allow for deeper understandings of the ways in which teachers specifically and schooling in general perpetuates the intersectionality of oppression that people and society face.

In this section I have discussed the ways in which white supremacy and neoliberalism are able to maintain their control within society. Because these systems of oppression are so deeply rooted throughout society, they become championed as common sense. Since they are seen as common sense, they can be even more difficult to transform. These ideologies were designed to continue to create new ways to maintain their power and control. Neoliberal multiculturalism in higher education and teacher education is there and used because through it, these systems of oppression are able to further cement their control in society. Neoliberal multiculturalism is implemented within higher education, teacher education, and K-12 classrooms and schools because of its roots in the ideologies of white supremacy and neoliberalism. It is able to sustain because of the success that it has with both white students in the university setting in general and white teachers in teacher education programs specifically. Because of its success, it is important to turn now to forms of resistance to neoliberal multiculturalism.

Going Deeper: More Examples of Liberating Pedagogies

While resistance to structural issues is a deep challenge, because they were designed in a way that allows them to perpetuate themselves, it is even more imperative for critical educators and critical teacher educators to practice forms of resistance to the use of neoliberal multiculturalism and other forms of surface level understanding of diversity within the higher education and teacher education setting. This is important work because these kinds of multicultural education have the impacts of perpetuating stereotypes, colorblindness, and deficit views and perceptions of diverse students can be damaging to students, other teachers, and

parents in schools. It is also clear that the reason forms of resistance through multicultural and other forms of critical pedagogy struggle to be used more widely is that these ideologies of control actively work against forms of pedagogy that require the transformation of these systems. When looking at the pervasiveness of neoliberalism's connection to white supremacy, I believe pedagogies that begin to explore whiteness, as well as pedagogies that explain the realities of the neoliberal movement, are imperative for future and current teachers, as well as all citizens to explore and more deeply understand.

One way to begin doing this within the context of teacher education is for teacher educators to provide readings and conversations that demonstrate to future teachers the ways in which racism, sexism, and classism present themselves in the classroom. Some of the ways that scholars argue that this can be done in spaces of teacher education is that teacher educators can explicitly teach about neoliberalism's connection to de-reforms (Bartell, Cho, Drake, Petchauer & Richmond, 2019; Morrison, 2016), the role that liberal arts education should play within the higher education space (Nussbaum, 2010; Roche, 2012), having an understanding of whiteness (Alvaré, 2018; Fylkesnes, 2018; hooks, 1989/2015; Matias & Grosland, 2016; Sleeter, 2001; Welton, Diem & Carpenter, 2019; Woodall, 2013), and anti-racist teaching and pedagogy (Case & Ngo, 2017; Bowman & Gottesman, 2017; Sleeter, 2018; Grande & Anderson, 2017).

The remainder of this chapter will focus on a discussion of how teacher educators and teachers can improve their classrooms, schools, and communities when they are able to better understand whiteness, as well as act, teach, and lead in ways that are anti-racist. Before getting to that discussion, I would like to also briefly discuss the role that learning about de-reforms and liberal arts education can improve the work of teachers and teacher educators as well. The education reform movement ushered in by the neoliberal ideology impacts all aspects of the

work that teacher, teacher educators, and their students do on a daily basis. Because of their impact it is important that current and future teachers are able to understand how these policies degrade our work. Morrison (2016) is one scholar who discusses these reforms, calling them de-reforms. She also believes that future teachers need to be explicitly taught about these reforms. She argues that many of the future educators that enter her classroom are "firm believers in the myth of meritocracy and argue that hard work will almost always lead to success in life" (Morrison, 2016, p. 1-2). It is important that educators who benefit from meritocracy are given spaces to unlearn the myths that come with neoliberal economic policies of standardization, accountability, and high-stakes testing. One issue with teaching in this way comes from the complexity of neoliberalism. Morrison (2016) writes that the "complexity makes teaching about these concepts exceptionally difficult and fraught with paradox" (p. 13). Along with explicitly teaching about the negative impacts of these education reforms, embracing an overall liberal arts education is very important as well.

Two scholars who discuss the importance of liberal arts education are Nussbaum (2010) and Roche (2012). Nussbaum (2010) argues that a liberal arts education is imperative for the future of democracy. She also argues that the knowledge measured on a standardized test is not the knowledge that is needed for the future of global citizenship. She believes liberal arts and critical thinking to be imperative for the future of global citizenship, writing "global citizenship is a vast and complex subject that needs to involve the contributions of history, geography, the interdisciplinary study of culture, the history of law and political systems, and the study of religion" (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 86-87). Liberal arts education encourages critical thinking and questioning the world around, which is the opposite of what high-stakes tests and neoliberal education reforms encourage in schools. Roche (1012) discusses why liberal arts education is so

important and why people should choose it rather than thinking of it as less than, or something that will not help a person get a job. He argues "[a] liberal arts education helps students develop formal virtues, such as the ability to listen, analyze, weigh evidence, and articulate a complex view" (Roche, 2012, lo. 773). With neoliberalism and other dominant ideologies such as racism, sexism, and classism, that are extremely complex issues, liberal arts education can act as ways for people to understand and combat these ideologies. Both liberal arts education and explicitly teaching about de-reforms can be important ways for future and current teachers to engage in complex questions about education. However, I think this dissertation has shown why these aren't commonplace. In order for dominant ideology to flourish, questioning and critiquing can't be encouraged. The remainder of the chapter will discuss forms of education that can be used to question and critique white supremacy and racism.

As noted in this chapter, neoliberalism and white supremacy are connected, and they encroach on the spaces of higher education and teacher education through neoliberal multiculturalism. Some scholars argue that in order to resist this, future teachers, especially future teachers who are white, need to gain an understanding of whiteness as a form of privilege. Woodall (2013) argues that teacher educators must engage their students in conversations around whiteness and racial inequality. Sleeter (2001) writes about the connection of teacher education to whiteness stating "both authors of color as well as White authors—are aware of the overwhelming presence of Whiteness in teacher education" (p. 102). She argues that in order for the teaching field to be filled with multicultural and culturally responsive teachers, there must also come an understanding of whiteness. It was stated earlier in the chapter that hooks (1989/2015) believes that explicitly teaching about whiteness and white supremacy in history can be significant in understanding not only the deep roots of white supremacy but also how

whiteness is a form of privilege and power. Fylkesnes (2018) uses critical whiteness studies as a theoretical framework and believes that for whiteness to be addressed, cultural diversity must be explicitly defined within spaces that it is discussed and taught about. Matias and Grosland (2016) look at a course in a teacher education program that attempts to do this. They argue "investigations into how Whiteness manifests itself in teacher education is a much needed antiracist praxis" (Matias & Grosland, 2016, p. 162). These scholars discuss an important connection of understanding whiteness to the role that anti-racist pedagogies, teaching, and leadership can have in school, higher education, and teacher education.

At the root of anti-racist teaching, learning, and leading is an understanding that racism is a core issue and problem, especially within the context of the United States. Case and Ngo (2017) argue that neoliberal multiculturalism became popularized as a form of resistance and against anti-racism activists and learning (p. 221). hooks (2003) writes about being anti-racist and argues that the "bitter ironies anti-racists face when working to end white-supremacist thinking and action is that the folks who most perpetuate it are the individuals who are usually the least willing to acknowledge that race matters" (p. 28). Understanding whiteness and anti-racism must go hand in hand. Bowman and Gottesman (2017) and Welton, Diem, and Carpenter (2019) discuss the role that antiracist leaders and administrators can play in schools. Leaders within schools and teacher education programs must work to ensure that anti-racism in and understanding whiteness and other forms of power and control in schooling is actually practiced and not just talked about at the surface level.

Some other ways in which scholars are working in anti-racist and multicultural ways in the context of schools today include teachers going beyond just teaching and learning, but acting as multicultural and anti-racist activists. Au (2017b) argues that multicultural education must go

beyond the classroom in today's context when hate speech is on the rise throughout the United

States. He writes "when our communities are under attack, we need to make clear where our

solidarities lie, and act on those solidarities in material ways" (Au, 2017, p. 149). He also begs

the following question of teachers who are not willing to fight against forms of oppression,

writing "[c]an someone who is fundamentally anti-immigrant (or anti-LGBQT, anti-Islam,

anti-Black, for that matter) be trusted to care for immigrant students, let alone be an effective

teacher?" (Au, 2017, p. 148). Au (2017b) demonstrates a need for teachers, and their education

institutions, to go beyond teaching about multicultural education and move toward creating

tangible ways to stand up to and transform the systems of oppression. Mayorga and Picower

(2018) argue that one way to do this is for teacher education to align itself with the goals of the

Black Lives Matter movement in order for future teachers to understand structural racism, and

work toward Black liberation. In a time of neoliberal multiculturalism within teacher education

spaces Mayorga and Picower (2018) argues that "a teaching force that remains majority White

and lacking in an awareness of intersecting forms of oppression, and a superficial and apolitical

construction of multicultural education, will fail to disrupt, and in some cases advance,

anti-Black violence and racial capitalism" (p. 226). Meiners and Tolliver (2016) also write about

the ways in which teachers can act in anti-racist ways in order to connect their teaching to

liberation instead of oppression. They write that connecting education to the Black Lives Matter

movement "requires seismic shifts including shrinking the footprint of policing in hallways and

communities, excavating the ongoing practices and policies that reproduce heterogendered white

supremacy in schools, and much more" (Meiners & Tolliver, 2016, p. 107). Practicing education

and activism in this way can be liberating for students and for future educators. While it can be

liberating, as discussed earlier in this chapter it can also be very challenging when higher

education and teacher education programs are often set up to not help future teachers learn and think about systemic issues in this way.

One way that critical educators within schools and teacher education programs can achieve this is by creating their own critical spaces. McCusker (2017) writes about her experience in the neoliberal academy and how the negative experiences prompted a change in her own pedagogy. She created feminist spaces within her classrooms to help her future teachers engage in very critical conversations. She writes "the project supported the claim that feminist pedagogy offers opportunities to engage with students in a deeper and more satisfying way" (McCusker, 2017, p. 456). McCusker (2017) demonstrates that critical educators can make active changes to their own education spaces as a way to engage further in critical conversations. Although neoliberalism attempts to teach us that system issues can be solved by the individual, I am not implying here that once critical educator in one school in one small community can make revolutionary changes to structural issues of racism, sexism, classism, ableism, or heteronormativity, but I am saying that it can be a start. If one critical educator is able to encourage another, then it can act as a snowball effect to make changes on the school or local level. Each new teacher, teacher educators, administrator, parent, or students who engages in working that transforms oppressive systems is important, because as the larger the number grows, the more change that can be made.

CHAPTER 6

BOUGHT AND SOLD:

THE COMMODIFICATION OF EDUCATION UNDER NEOLIBERALISM

Throughout the other essays in this dissertation thus far, I have discussed a multitude of issues as it relates to all types of education, whether it be K-12 education, teacher education, and higher education. I have also given many examples of critical pedagogies that critique a variety of social justice issues plaguing both society and these educational spaces as well. I am still continuously reminded of the question regarding why these forms of pedagogy are not more popularized in all aspects of education. This essay will discuss yet another reason why I believe more teachers have not begun a journey toward becoming a critical educator. The reason that this essay will explore is the issue of knowledge being reduced to a commodity, or something that can be bought and sold. Many teachers I know go through further education with no intention of learning, but rather they do so simply for the pay raise. This is in no way meant to shame teachers who do that, because as has been discussed in previous chapters of this dissertation, structural issues cannot be fixed with individual solutions. This issue arises because neoliberalism has been able to turn education in all of its forms into a commodity. Commodification of all forms of education has been ingrained into us for the entirety of our educational careers, and is an aspect of the neoliberal ideology. In order to change the attitude of teachers to see that education itself is important takes reconceptualizing the education system as a whole. We are taught from the moment we enter schools that *education* is a test score, grade, or diploma rather than spaces of gaining knowledge.

The last issue, or facet of neoliberalism as it relates to schools, teacher education, and education in general that will be discussed in this dissertation is the role that commodification

plays in perpetuating the neoliberal ideology. Commodification refers to the ways in which public goods, such as education in this instance, are turned into commodities, or purchasable items. Under pervasive neoliberalism all aspects of education, including higher education, teacher education, teachers and their students, and even knowledge in general, are turned into purchasable commodities. The critique of commodification as it relates to the capitalist structure of society and neoliberalism has a long history in the field of education (Adorno, Horkheimer, & Cummings, 1972/2002; Brown, 2015; Brown, 2019; Chomsky, 2011; Held, 1980). The critique of commodification was made by the early critical theorists at the Frankfurt School. Adorno, Horkheimer and Cummings (1972) critiqued what they called the culture industry, or the role that mass production, technology, and the media can play in mass producing culture. Held (1980) writes about the early critical theorists' critique of the culture industry writing that it "produces for mass consumption and significantly contributes to the determination of that consumption" (Held, 1980, p. 91). This reminds us of one main goal of the neoliberal agenda, and it is to create ways in which the ideology is able to perpetuate itself. Held (1980) goes on to write about these scholar's critiques and demonstrates the ways in which the Frankfurt School scholars were able to critique capitalism for its role in turning all aspects of culture into purchasable objects. One major aspect of culture that has become increasingly commodified is education. Brown (2019) also writes about the connection of neoliberalism to commodification. She specifically discusses the rise of the neoliberal ideology and its connection to the rise of commodity culture, or when everything, including non-physical things such as education and knowledge, become things that can be purchased.

Looking further into the role that commodification plays in perpetuating the neoliberal ideology on a larger scale beyond just education, Harvey (2007) argues that neoliberalism creates

the commodification of everything. He writes about the connection of neoliberalism to the love of the free market, and argues "[t]o presume that markets and market signals can best determine all allocative decisions is to presume that everything can in principle be treated as a commodity" (Harvey, 2007, p. 165). When the free market is treated as the answer to all questions, people, public goods, knowledge and everything becomes something that can be bought or sold for profit. Chomsky (2011) also discusses the connection of neoliberalism to commodification, specifically as it relates to when corporations are able to make profits off of exerting control over what is taught in schools. He writes that as corporations have been able to be considered *people* "they were no longer bound to the specific purposes designated by State charter but could act as they chose, with few constraints" (Chomsky, 2011, p. 97). This again demonstrates the neoliberal ideological standpoint that private corporations are given the same rights as people with little or none of the same responsibilities. An example of this is seen through the rise of educational technology and educational technology corporations who have begun to have much of the control over what and whose knowledge is taught in school with no responsibility to the public when students and teachers are unable to think critically about the world. As we have learned throughout much of this dissertation however, that is for the purpose as a way to sustain profit and continue exerting by corporations.

Brown (2015) also argues to this point when she writes that neoliberalism "formulates everything, everywhere, in terms of capital investment and appreciation, including and especially humans themselves" (p. 176). Under the neoliberal ideology we are taught that education is no more than an investment. It is something we pay for, and will be rewarded for in terms of higher pay or a better job. Learning and gaining knowledge and understanding of the world is not something we are taught to do just for learning's sake. The neoliberal ideology as it has been

embedded into society tells us that there has to be a material reward for learning and schooling. Brown (2015) writes about this stating that "knowledge is not sought for purposes apart from capital enhancement, whether the capital is human, corporate, or financial" (p. 177). I believe this to be another issue that sites of teacher education can encounter with both future and current teachers. Teachers often enter these programs with the intent of receiving a pay increase rather than for the purpose of engaging in critical learning. Commodification, and its connection to the neoliberal ideology has major impacts on K-12 education, teacher education, and higher education. This essay will discuss how neoliberalism has turned everything into a commodity including students, teachers, and knowledge. It will also discuss specific aspects of education that act as commodifying agents such as educational technology corporations, edTPA, and in general the rise of the use of other kinds of technology. Finally, it will discuss forms of critical pedagogy that can help future and current teachers to better understand commodification in order to attempt to resist this within our schools and sites of teacher education.

<center>Education as an Industry: edTPA, Ed-tech, and the Increased use of AI</center>

When discussing neoliberalism as a deep rooted and structural issue in our society and schools, this dissertation has looked at the ways in which this ideology has been able to root itself throughout our society and especially in schools and sites of teacher education programs. Commodification of education is one such way that neoliberalism has been able to do this. Corporate interests in education, policies, and an increase in educational technologies have been able to allow commodification as an extension of the neoliberal agenda to become more entrenched into our schools and sites of teacher education. Some of these ways have been through the use of edTPA in teacher education, and overuse of educational technologies in schools, and artificial intelligence technology, or AI. I believe AI will become a bigger problem

if left unchecked in schools. These issues are important to think about when looking at their connection to neoliberalism and the commodification of education, teacher education, and knowledge.

edTPA

The first issue I would like to discuss as it relates to the commodification of education, specifically teacher education, was discussed briefly in chapter three of this dissertation, and that is the role that edTPA as a teacher performance portfolio has in controlling future teachers' ability to enter into classrooms. edTPA is a teacher assessment used widely in the United States as a means of measuring teachers and their education program's ability to meet certification standards. Neoliberalism as an ideology allows for corporations, Pearson Inc. specifically when discussing edTPA, the ability to grossly overstep their role in teacher education and as Gorlewski and Tuck (2019) assert decide who becomes a teacher? Performance assessments like edTPA give entirely too much control to corporations in deciding the answer to that question. They also create issues of commodification of the future teachers who have to purchase the systems and the students that they have to teach in order to pass the system. I feel it is important to note here the connection of these performance systems to the manufactured crisis in education as discussed in chapter two. Neoliberal policies that require the use of future teachers to demonstrate their ability to teach, as often measured by test scores on high-stakes tests created by the same corporations, are harmful to teacher education specifically and education in general. The edTPA website even specifically discusses the "challenges facing public education" as a justification of their product. Grineski (2017) writes that the corporate takeover through edTPA is seen as the solution to the problems. This again demonstrates the ways in which neoliberalism allows for corporations to

generate new problems in education as a way for making more profits in the form of new solutions.

As it relates to the commodification of education, the over implementation of edTPA needs to be addressed here for its connection to further ingraining both neoliberalism and racism as structures of control within the educational system. One connection to neoliberalism is its ability to generate profits for corporations by reducing teacher educators, future teachers, and their students to commodities that are bought. Cross, Dunn, and Dotson (2018) discuss the ways that neoliberal policies are integrated throughout teacher education through the use of edTPA. Gorlewski and Tuck (2019) also write about the connection of edTPA to the furthering of the neoliberal agenda. "When corporate entities, whose primary aim is profit, are entrusted with decisions about the public good, profit trumps justice" (Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019, p. 89). Social justice teaching and breaking down systems of oppression will never be the goal of the oppressor; therefore, the free-market and neoliberalism will continue to want to ensure that policies such as teacher performance assessments are able to thrive. Tuck and Gorlewski (2016) also write about the ways that neoliberalism, through edTPA, is also connected to the perpetuation of racism in teacher education and schools. They write that "settler colonialism and antiblackness are interwoven into this tool of education policy" (Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016, p. 148). The way this system embeds colonialism and antiblackness into it is that teachers are scored based on their ability to follow predetermined acts by both the future teacher and the students. Tuck and Gorleski (2016) write that their own future teachers worried about "how student behavior that did not conform to White, middle-class, academic norms might influence scorers' evaluations" (p. 203). The predetermined acts that the systems require of future teachers leaves out that these acts are cloaked in white and middle-class norms. Another aspect of

edTPA's commodification of education is that it reduces future teachers and their students to data points for the profit of corporations. Eve Tuck and Julie Gorlewski's work on edTPA shows the ways in which neoliberalism, through policies like edTPA, are maintaining and perpetuating inequalities in schools. The control of the way future teachers are prepared and educated for the classroom is turned into a product that is bought en masse, allowing for teacher certification to be turned into something that is commodified and can be bought by those future teachers who have the capital to do so.

edTPA as one of the main systems that decides which teachers are able to enter into classrooms is a form of commodification of education because it demonstrates that the *best teachers* are those who can afford to purchase this system, ultimately commodifying the teacher certification and education process. Greenblatt (2018) writes that the teachers "with the most capital have an advantage in the system and a greater chance of success" (p. 822). Capital here does not mean only financial capital, but the capital that comes with being white, straight, male, or middle and upper class. The contradiction of the neoliberal ideology and logic, especially as it relates to the commodification of education is summed up well by Jones et. al (2021). They write that "neoliberalism claims to give individuals an open space to compete freely judged by objective measures, in fact, the system is run by those distant from the individual and these distant organizers maintain an unequal system that favors the privileged" (Jones et. al, 2021, p.194). edTPA and other teacher performance portfolios pose as an objective measure, while being run by corporations that care only about the profits they can make off of future teachers, teacher educators, and their students.

Ed-tech

Another way through which commodification of education occurs is the increased use of educational technology. Schools and districts across the United States rely on educational technology. These different technologies and the corporations that create them compete in ways where they argue their tech is better at improving student test scores than the other. The increased use of educational technology was discussed briefly in chapter four of this dissertation on de-skilling of teacher work. Not only does educational technology de-skill the work that teachers do, but it also turns our students into commodities by reducing them to the number they can produce on a test score. Another way that this commodifies education and learning in general is that it turns it into something that can be purchased for profit by an educational technology corporation. The critique of technology and scientification of education can be traced back to early critical theorists. Adorno, Horkheimer and Cummings (1947/1972/2002) critique technology and its impact on the standardization of culture. This has major impacts on the role that technology is now playing in education as a way to control knowledge. Herbert Marcuse is another one of the early critical theorists who critiqued technology and its role in impacting the future of society. His work is quoted in Ingram and Simon-Ingram (1991), when he argues against technological fetishism, or the over reliance on technology. Although these critiques were made long ago, these early scholars' fears about the role that technology can play on society can also demonstrate the detrimental impacts that technology was able to and continues to be able to impact education and society.

Many teachers, schools, and districts use a variety of educational technologies. The uses of these technologies can range from behavior management technology, to learning analytic technology, to camera and web surveillance technology. There is no shortage of technology that

teachers can, and sometimes are required to use, in their classrooms on a daily basis. Gorlweski and Tuck (2019) even argue that there is an educational technology saturation problem, meaning the sheer number of educational technology options available to schools and teachers is too much. Similar to the ways in which edTPA allows corporations to control and commodify teacher education and teacher certification, educational technology and its constant promise of best practices and higher test scores controls the work teachers and their students do daily within the classroom. These programs reduce students to data points and numbers. Nussbaum (2010) discusses why these technologies have been popularized in schools. She writes "profit motive suggests to many concerned leaders that science and technology are of crucial importance for the future" (Nussbaum, 2010, p. 7). Educational tech and other tech companies are able to lobby and spend the monies that they have made off of student and teacher data to fabricate the idea that technology is an essential part of education's future. Weaver (2018) also discusses the role of for-profit science and technology writing "[t]he problem is not technology nor science, it is the 'overturning' the necessity of science into a demand in the name of profit" (p. 4). Knowledge and learning are now transformed from something that is done into something that can be bought from a corporation for their profit.

Another impact of educational technology that I feel is important to note is the impact that it has in perpetuating racism and other forms of oppression. Kwet and Prinsloo (2020) write that technology corporations that collect and track student data "frequently feature algorithmic bias whereby a computer system creates unfair or discriminatory outcomes that have a disparate impact on oppressed and marginalized communities" (p. 519). They also write about how educational technology has impacts on tracking students based on their ability to pass tests and meet standards, and are also becoming a bigger part of the over surveillance of student behavior

and bodies. Learning analytic software and technology which has been championed as a way to individualize education for students is dangerous because of its ability to track student data throughout their educational careers, and potentially throughout their adult lives as well. Surveillance software that tracks student movements whether through cameras in schools or technology that tracks what students do on computers is a major issue in the commodification of students as well. These technologies and software are able to decide what a *typical* student should look like and also control students who don't meet that definition of *typical*. The definition of typical often means the ability to sit still and follow directions. Monahan (2009) discusses facial recognition software in schools and argues that even though it is said to increase safety, "independent evaluations of video surveillance systems have found them to be entirely ineffectual at preventing violent crimes" (p.123). Cameras in schools are increasing the surveillance state, while not really helping to stop what they are intended to be helping, which is increased safety and security. We see this as the number of school shooting continue to rise even though the number of camera surveillance has risen too. These technologies are allowing increased profit for corporations while increasing the policing and tracking of student bodies and minds.

One more issue with educational technology as it relates to perpetuating inequality was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that is the digital divide. Jones (2021) writes that "youth disproportionately experiencing the digital divide were overwhelmingly Black and Brown students" (p. 429). For many of these students not only were schools closed, but because the education system was so heavily relying on technology to deliver instruction, many students did not have access to the technology that schools, districts, and teachers were using to learn. Because they were not able to access technology, something that is not education anyway, they

were left out completely. I have talked about the negative role that educational technology can and continues to play in creating students and teachers that are commodities. I have also mentioned their ability to perpetuate and create new forms of oppression. That being said, while I disagree with the overuse of educational technology in schools today, if these technologies are going to continue to be used then it is important not that keeping people from obtaining them is another way in which education within the neoliberal systems perpetuates inequalities.

Tech of the future: AI education

Educational technology is taking on a new form through the further use of artificial intelligence, or AI, software in education. I feel it is important to distinguish artificial intelligence from educational technology in general because of its rise in popularity and increased uses in recent years. Kwet and Prinsloo (2020) write about the increasing role of artificial intelligence in education, writing "technologies like artificial intelligence are increasingly shaping knowledge and research – the very foundation of education" (p. 510). The major facet of AI as it has to do with the commodification of education is the same as the role that other educational technologies have. Student and teacher data is bought and sold as a way for the corporations that create the technologies to make a profit. Saltman (2020) discusses the role that AI education can have in further privatizing education spaces for the profit of corporations. He is able to demonstrate how AI in education can further neoliberalism and the commodification of students. Artificial intelligence, education, and software are becoming a major issue in education as it relates to neoliberalism and the commodification of education.

Another reason that I believe it is significant to discuss artificial intelligence specifically is for how it especially relates to the commodification of students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and neurodivergent students or students with disabilities. Kwet and Prinsloo (2020) discuss a

study that shows the racial bias of AI facial recognition software. They write about a study in which faces were assigned either a negative or positive emotion based on the person's face, and "the study found black males were assigned more negative emotions than white males" (Kwet & Prinsloo, 2020, p. 519). Benjamin (2019) also writes about racial biases in technology. She writes "[s]ome technologies fail to see Blackness, while others render Black people hypervisible and expose them to systems of racial surveillance" (p. 68). These scholars demonstrate the ways in which AI technology can impact people and students of color. Dixon-Román, Nichols, and Nyame-Mensah (2020) also discuss racial bias in AI technology specifically as it relates to one particular AI software that is supposed to support students in their ability to write essays. They argue that the software perpetuates racial bias in language and writing. Madaio, Blodgett, Mayfield, and Dixon-Román (2021) write that racial bias is not the only bias that artificial intelligence educational technology can have on students. They write that these technologies also "reinforce dominant ideologies of behavioral appropriateness—which construct racialized, LGBTQ+, disabled, neurodivergent, and other marginalized students' behavior as inappropriate or criminal" (Madaio, Blodgett, Mayfield, & Dixon-Román, 2021, p. 9). The increased use of artificial intelligence software in schools and classrooms will further oppress students, especially students who already experience an intersectionality of multiple oppressions, at the hands of larger profits for corporations. The commodification of education through AI technology is an important current issue in education that future and current teachers need to be aware of in order to ensure that our students and ourselves are treated as more than just a commodity or data that can be bought or sold to the highest bidder.

Everything is a Commodity

As discussed in the opening of this essay, many scholars believe that neoliberalism as a dominant ideology acts in ways that turn everything into a commodity, or something that can be bought. In the field of education, students, teachers, higher education, and even knowledge in general have been turned into commodities that are bought and sold for the profit of corporations. This connects to the degradation of teacher education because teacher educators who are attempting to create future and current teachers who understand and use critical forms of pedagogy are met with resistance. This resistance comes from future and current teachers who are entering these programs for commodification gains, or by teachers who believe that critical education is futile within a system when they are required to teach a certain curriculum, meet education standards, and are under pressure to teach to the test. This section will discuss the ways that students, teachers, and knowledge are reduced to becoming commodities that can be bought and sold for profit.

Students as Commodities

The first aspect of commodification that I would like to discuss is the ways in which neoliberalism acts in ways that turn students into commodities. The commodification of students happened through testing and an overuse of educational technology in classrooms. While both of these issues were discussed in other chapters, it is important to discuss them here as well. Au (2009) discusses the commodification of students through testing. He writes "the process of reducing students to test scores, essentially abstracting a number with which to define them in relation to other students, requires that their individuality be omitted, that their variability be disregarded and reduced" (Au, 2009, pp. 40-41). Not only are students reduced to numbers through these tests, but large corporations are given the ability to profit off of this reduction as

well. When our students are subjected to taking these high stakes tests, the corporation that

creates them effectively treats students as tested commodities. While high-stakes tests are one

such way that students are treated as commodities, it is not the only way. Others discuss the ways

in which neoliberalism has been able to change education in a way where students are not

educated toward critical thinking, but rather are trained in ways that serve the capitalist system

through the hidden curriculum of schooling. Saltman and Means (2015) write about this and

argue that the dominant ideology of neoliberalism "regularly reminds everyone that there is no

alternative to the market and so the purpose of education is to prepare students to serve the

system" (paragraph 3). Students are educated to become the commodities of the corporations and

jobs that they may one day hold. Hill and Kumar (2017) write about this phenomenon as well,

especially as it relates to the role that teachers can play in sustaining this. They write "teachers

are the most dangerous of workers because they have a special role in shaping, developing and

forcing the single commodity on which the whole capitalist system rests: labor power" (Hill &

Kumar, 2017, p. 80). In the neoliberal systems the students in our classrooms are seen as merely

the future workers within the labor market. The future of these markets, and in turn the capitalist

and neoliberal systems altogether, are in our classrooms each day. The pedagogies we use can

have lasting impacts on changing and transforming these systems for the better as well.

One final aspect of the ways in which students are turned into commodities is through the

role that educational technology plays in schools today. Educational technology is used in many

aspects of education, and Levidow (2001) writes about the impacts that this has on students and

teachers. Levidow (2001) writes that students become *instructional commodities*. He argues

"[s]tudent-teacher relationships are reified as relationships between consumers and providers of

things. This marginalizes any learning partnerships between them as people. Students readily

become objects of market research" (Levidow, 2001, p. 7). Through the overuse of educational technologies and their influence on what is taught, how it is taught, and whose knowledge is valued, students become commodities of corporations for market research. We as teachers have to push back against the idea that our students are just future workers, data for corporate profit, and commodities that can be bought.

Teachers as Commodities

Just as the students in our classrooms are treated as commodities for profit from corporations under neoliberalism, we as teachers are treated the same. Some of the ways in which teachers are treated like commodities is through examples that have been discussed in previous chapters such as scripted curriculums, de-skilling of teacher work, and private and charter schools. hooks (2003), Giroux (2019), and Saltman (2013) talk about the ways in which these aspects of neoliberalism in education and teacher education lead to the treatment of teachers as commodities. When discussing the role of scripted curriculum in schools and classrooms in public schools Saltman (2013) argues that these allow for teachers to become "delivery agents of discreet bits of knowledge treated as commodities rather than as public intellectuals responsible for fostering in students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to link knowledge to broader public issues and social struggles" (Saltman, 2013, p. 54). These forms of curriculum act in similar ways to testing as it relates to students being treated as commodities. Teachers are teaching these scripted curriculums, and private corporations are profiting from teachers, schools, and districts buying and implementing the curriculum, with their *success*, as measured by test scores, which create further profits. Teachers, like their students, are reduced to data points and numbers that are bought and sold. When thinking about the increase of private and charter schools and its impact on reducing teachers to commodities,

these schools give parents and their students the ability to shop for schools and teachers that they like best. The idea of shopping for teachers is not just an issue in K-12 schools eithers, it is also an issue within the higher education space as well.

In higher education, teachers and professors are treated as commodities. hooks (2003) writes about this issue, with special regard to how this impacts professors who teach coursework that is critical of social and structural issues in society. She writes "colleges and universities rely on students 'buying' the commodity 'courses' to survive" (hooks, 2003, p. 4). Professors are subjected to the construct that courses in higher education are things that are bought. Giroux (2019) also writes about the reduction of teachers to commodities, and its connection to neoliberalism. He argues that the corporate structures of schooling and higher education under neoliberalism "increas[es] the power of administrators at the expense of faculty, reducing faculty to a mostly temporary and low-wage workforce, and reducing students to customers— ripe for being trained for low-skilled jobs" (Giroux, 2019, p. 19). Under the neoliberal ideology both teachers and their students alike are reduced to commodities that are bought by corporations to ensure that they have laborers to continue working. hooks (2003) does provide some hope arguing that when more students begin taking courses with critical content that uncovers issues of race, class, gender, and their intersectionality, it can lead to major changes. She writes about when this happened in her own career and argues that it is an example to show that "the authority of the traditional white male power structure was being successfully undermined" (hooks, 2003, p. 4). This demonstrates that when students and teachers advocate and commit to standing their ground and teaching in ways that are liberating rather than oppressive, real change can happen.

Knowledge as Commodities

The reduction of both teachers and students to commodities is ultimately tied to the deeper understanding that knowledge in general is thought of as a commodity that can be bought, and not something that is done. When knowledge is reduced to this, it leads to the reduction of teachers and students to commodities. Nikolakaki (2017) and Saltman (2013) both write about the connection of the reduction of knowledge to a commodity with its specific connection to neoliberalism. Nikolakai (2017) writes that "under the neoliberal regime, the purpose of education has certainly shifted from that of a public good to a commodity" (p. 90). While the reduction of knowledge to a commodity is detrimental in public schools across the United States, it is especially degrading to spaces of higher education and teacher education where the purpose should be more than a degree that is purchased in order to get a job. Higher and teacher education should be spaces where critical learning should take place. Instead, institutions of higher education have become their own form of the free-market, a place where students shop for courses, degrees, and the knowledge they want to learn. Brown (2015) writes "the market value of knowledge-- it's income-enhancing prospects for individuals and industry alike-- is now understood as both its driving purpose and leading line of defense" (p. 187). Universities are able to sell themselves to students as the best education, the best degree, the best preparation for a job, or the place with the best football team or amenities, rather than emphasizing liberal arts education, critical education, or learning for learning's sake. Brown (2015) also writes about how this impacts the role that liberal arts education can play in the higher education space. She writes that these universities, colleges, and other sites of higher education "cannot now recruit students with the promise of discovering one's passions through a liberal arts education" (Brown, 2015, p.

41). This really impacts the overall role that higher education can play in helping people who attend them to understand systems and structures of oppression.

This reduction of knowledge occurs because neoliberalism as an ideology places the good and profit of corporations over the value of people and their ability to learn about critical education, ultimately because a critical understanding of issues may lead to the destruction of systems of oppression. hooks (1989/2015) writes about the connection of knowledge as a commodity to the upholding of systems of oppressions. She writes that when knowledge is offered as a commodity "universities work to reinforce and perpetuate the status quo" (hooks, 1989/2015, p. 51). The connection of education and higher education to the continuation of systems of oppression is apparent. Lugo-Lugo (2017) writes about the frustration of teachers who are attempting to teach against this, writing

> Instead of advancing marketplace ideologies, as a place of higher learning, the university can privilege learning over money, students over corporation, and people over profit. The university can become a place where people go to seek knowledge, not one where they go to buy their diploma. In the end, it would be just a tad easier to be able to talk to students about race relations, racial inequality, and racism without having to contend with an institution that puts a price tag on me, my class, and my lectures. (Lugo-Lugo, 2017, p. 49).

In order for both K-12 education, higher education, and teacher education to become less tied to neoliberalism and other forms of oppression, we as teachers, and especially as critical educators, must make sure that knowledge and education is no longer something that is thought of as a commodity that can be bought, but rather is something that is done for learning's sake, or can create systemic changes to oppressive institutions and systems.

We Won't Be Bought: Resistance to the Commodification of Education

Commodification of education including students, teachers, and knowledge in general is a key tenet of the neoliberal ideology. It reduces knowledge to something that can be bought, exacerbates inequalities through technology, and prioritizes corporate profits over people, each of which further entrenches neoliberalism as an ideology into our schools and society. If the future of teacher education and education can be conceptualized toward a more socially just future, working towards changing the field away from commodification must be a key aspect of that. Education, learning, and knowledge should be done for learning's sake and not for the profit of corporations or the hope of financial gain by individuals, and that mindset needs to be a major shift in the way teachers, teacher educators, students, administrators, and everyone think about learning. Some of the ways that teachers and teacher educators can work in resistance to commodification will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter including being critical of over technification of education, understanding the role that educational technology can play in perpetuating inequalities, and creating alternatives to aspects of commodification of education such as edTPA.

One way that teachers and teacher educators can work to better understand and resist commodification of education is through better understanding technology, science, and in general being critical of the commodification of knowledge. Weaver (2018) writes about each of these. He argues that through the neoliberal ideology "knowledge is now defined as something that is a commodity that can be patented and eventually either sold or turned into something that can be sold" (Weaver, 2018, p. 102). Challenging this notion that knowledge and education is something that is bought for ourselves, our peers, and our students is a great first step in resisting commodification and the overuse of technology in our schools. I think one way that we as

critical educators can do this is by resisting the idea that post-secondary teacher education is something that is done for only a pay raise, and encourage one another to further our education in programs that are critical of social justice issues. As it pertains to the role of commodification of knowledge for our students, it is important that we as educators gain a more well-rounded understanding of technology and the sciences. Weaver (2018) writes about the importance of learning about science as a way to not be excluded from discussions on science and technology in curriculum studies. He writes that "[s]cience is too important to leave to the scientists and non-scientists in a democracy need to be involved in science research agendas and policies" (Weaver, 2018, p. 184). As technology corporations use science as a way to prove that their program is the *best* form of education, it is important that we as teachers, who will have to implement these programs, are critical and able to understand how these corporations are attempting to show that their form of knowledge is the best.

When looking at the forms of resistance that teacher educators and sites of teacher education can do, I think it will be increasingly important for the spaces to engage in critical conversations about the role that educational technology and the corporations that create them have over schooling and what students learn in schools. It is important for teacher educators and teacher education programs to not only critique the role that these corporations have in profiting off of the commodification of education and students, but also their role in producing and reproducing inequalities and oppression. Madaio, Blodgett, Mayfield, and Dixon-Román (2021) argue

> Educational policies and practices present visions of a particular type of learner,
> and attempt to prepare that learner for life in society—educational AI systems
> then instantiate these visions and values into algorithmic systems that may further

entrench them. Whose visions are these? What type of learner is imagined, and what type of society are they being educated for? These are questions with critical consequences in a settler colonialist, white supremacist, patriarchal, cis heteronormative, ableist society. (p. 16)

There is a need for teachers, teacher educators, and for us as a society as a whole to consider the role that technology plays in perpetuating inequalities as the future of technology becomes more advanced and more widely used. If these technologies are going to perpetuate and find new ways to further oppress people, especially students and teachers, then it is something that needs to be discussed and learned about further within teacher education programs.

In looking at one teacher education programs teaching and learning about educational technology and how it furthers marginalization, Health and Segal (2021) argue that preservice teachers are unaware that educational technology can act as tools that perpetuate whiteness. The future teachers in this program were unable to understand the role that behavior tracking technology and learning analytic technology had on furthering the control of students through deciding what knowledge is best to learn as well as what kind of student behaviors are considered *acceptable* in schools. Kwet and Prinsloo (2020) write that understanding the role that educational technology plays in schools in perpetuating inequalities is important for students to understand as well. They write that schools should "equip their students with the tools to think critically about the digital ecosystem" (Kwet & Prinsloo, 2020, p. 522). As educational technology and technology in general becomes more widely used throughout society, it is important that both our students and our current and future teachers are able to understand its impacts. Heath and Segal (2021) argue that there is a "special urgency to acknowledge and engage in anti-racist work in educational technology and teacher preparation" (p.8). If we as

educators, especially critical educators are to teach in ways that are liberating rather than oppressive, then we must understand the ways that educational technology works in opposition to those goals.

One final form of resistance that sites of teacher education and teacher educators can work toward in creating resistance to the commodification of teacher education is by working to create more socially just alternatives to teacher assessment and teacher performance portfolios. Gorlewski and Tuck (2019) demonstrate an example of this kind of work. They worked with a large group of teacher education professors to create an alternative scoring rubric to edTPA. In their collaborative study, they compared their scoring to the scores of the same portfolios as scored by the tech corporation Pearson. The researchers were not intended to create a replacement to edTPA, but they did want to question the role that corporations such as Pearson have in deciding who becomes a teacher. They write that "[u]nless the profession comes together around a shared vision for teacher education, market-driven forces will continue to create a vision for us" (Gorlewski & Tuck, 2019, p. 171). There is a need for naming the issues in education as well as creating ways to overcome the issues. While naming the ways that damaging ideologies such as neoliberalism, racism, sexism, classism, and ableism impact our schools and lives, in order to enact changes, we must also put those critiques into practice. Gorlewski and Tuck (2019) write "we must simultaneously contest injustice and create tools that promote justice" (p. 198). This is significant because there is a need to go beyond just critiquing systems of injustice. We must actively resist them by working in collaboration with students, teachers, parents, and communities to create meaningful change. In creating these forms of resistance, teacher education, teachers, and teacher educators can create a better future for the field of teacher education and education that allows for a more collaborative idea for what the

future of education can look like rather than relying on corporations and the wealthy elite to

make those decisions.

CHAPTER 7

DREAMS FOR OUR COMMUNITIES, CHILDREN, AND TEACHERS: SPECULATIVE

FICTION OF A BETTER FUTURE

Throughout this dissertation I have written about a variety of ways that neoliberalism as an ideology of control in schools and society has found ways to both degrade education, as well as create new structures to further its hold on society. I have also discussed the ways that teachers, teacher educators, communities, students, and families have been acting in resistance to the reforms, policies, and aspects of neoliberalism in schools and sites of teacher education that have been discussed throughout the first six essays. One of the goals of this dissertation is to name the many ways in which neoliberalism is able to impact schools, teacher education, and society as a whole. Only by first being able to name our oppression, can we begin to work in ways to overcome it. Throughout each of the previous essays I have named the ways that neoliberalism creeps through schools, further entrenches other forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and heteronormativity, and ultimately degrades education and teacher education away from something that is done, and instead as something that is bought. I think back to my initial question of anger that guided this dissertation work: could each of my previous teacher education experiences really be this wrong? How is it that I have gone a decade into my teaching career without understanding the role that structural issues in society play in schools? I believe that the essays before have shown why critical education, critical pedagogies, and teaching in ways that resist forms of oppression are not done as often as they should be in a variety of education spaces. The reason being that when forms of critical education are practiced, more people begin working and teaching in ways to dismantle the systems of oppression and these dominant ideologies are designed to sustain themselves and not be overcome. Education,

whether that be K-12 education, teacher education, or higher education, are created as extensions of power to uphold these systems. I have spent the first six chapters explaining a variety of ways that education acts in this way to uphold the neoliberal ideology, and this final chapter will be dreams of what a better future could be. Of course, we cannot stop at simply dreaming for a better future. We must move toward action and change. However, sometimes in the contexts of schools and spaces where teachers and teacher educators have little to no control, starting with dreaming is very important.

In recent history even while writing this dissertation, I feel as if there is a lot of uncertainty about the future. Each day there seems to be news of another mass shooting, new and damaging impacts of climate change, White supremacist rallying, or new supreme court rulings that entrench conservative, and evangelical Christian ideology cloaked as morality and the neoliberal agenda. These events and the overall context of attempting to teach critically in a context where forms of critical pedagogies are being made illegal, made it much more difficult to think about what a post-neoliberal utopia may look like. Because of this I have also thought a lot more about resistance. While I know, and it was discussed in this dissertation, that dominant ideologies are not overcome by individuals, but rather collective movement and change, sometimes those changes have to start small. It can be a challenge to think about what a future of education and society may look like if it were to become unattached to these dominant ideologies of control, but I believe that for the sake of a better future we as educators must dream. I use the word we here, and that was another challenge when writing and thinking about a reconceptualized future, because throughout this dissertation I was working individually. This final chapter draws on the inspiration of Etopio et. al (2022), and their collective dreams for the future. Unlike this group of scholars who were able to think bigger and wider, because they were

thinking of the future collaboratively, I was thinking and dreaming individually. Whether as individuals or collectively, we must dream about a better future for our students, for our own children, and for the children of our friends and families. Each preceding chapter discussed forms of resistance that are currently being done in communities, and this final chapter acts as my own dreams about if resistance continues and spreads. This concluding chapter describes through speculative fiction my own dreams of resistance using depictions of both dystopian and utopian futures of education.

This chapter is broken into four vignettes each concerning the different issues that the previous essays have explicated. The first vignette describes dreams I have about fighting the fear of overcoming dominant ideologies of control and how that can start with one conversation. This vignette touches on themes of introducing multiculturalism and democratic schools into classrooms, schools and districts. The next is a dream of youth. It's a dream for what I wish I could have been in my youth as well as a hope for what my current and future students are able to be. This vignette discusses both student activism and teacher certification. The third vignette is about a parent in a not-so-distant future who wants the best for her child, and focuses on opting out of neoliberal reform such as high stakes testing, standardization, and scripted curriculum. The final vignette describes a dystopian current and the potential of a better future, and centers around the commodification of education as well as the deskilling of teachers.

Dreams of fighting fear: My next journey in education

The sun rises with a quickness on what I was hoping to be a lazy Saturday morning. It pierces through the upstairs window in the hallway. The large oak branches provided no shade because they were just outside the reach of the rays. I was hoping this would be a Saturday morning like one I hadn't had in a few years. One where I could sleep in, go for a bike ride, and

maybe even finish that puzzle I had started a few months back. One thing for sure is that it was a Saturday morning without a worry of writing or editing. I may even get to read something new just for the fun of it. Instead, the light that came in earlier than I expected or wanted it to reminds me that the work I had started a few years back is never done. I reluctantly remove myself from the bed, pour a cup of coffee and take a walk around the block with my dog.

As I walk the streets of downtown, like I have done many mornings before, I look at the old homes and buildings. On the walk I see many houses with flags. I see a whole range of them, from the traditional red white and blue, a progress pride flag, a confederate flag, a Black Lives Matter flag, and even a T***p 2020 flag. Each waving in the same winds. While some create strong emotions of anger, others remind me that I am not alone in this traditionally conservative town. Past the houses is the large park where the confederate statues have finally been removed. Past the park and before the multi-millions dollar historic homes are public housing. My house sits in the middle of the two streets as it was once a maid's home for the owners of the million-dollar home.

Each part of my walk, from the various flags, to the park that is now free of eye sores, to the image of my house all act as a visual representation of the juxtaposition of the history of racism, sexism, and classism in this town. Some even show that there is a hope of a better future, and that I am not alone in the community. There are more people who share a desire for a more socially just future for all of its residents. After I take my walk I would normally prepare to go to the public library where I would sit for hours on end either writing, editing, or reading. Today I decided that reading for pleasure would be a fun new activity. I picked up a book that I haven't read in a while. Maybe it was the bright orange cover that caught my eye first, but Herman Hesse's Siddhartha seems to pop off of the shelf. It seems fitting, because it reminds me of many

experiences that life brings with it, and I was about to encounter my next one.

The weekend of course comes to an end, and back to the school I go to. On my drive to school, although less than a five-minute drive or fifteen-minute bike ride, I am again shown visual representations of the racism, sexism, and classism in my town. On the ride I pass the mostly white neighborhood with the million-dollar historic homes, I pass the homeless person sleeping on the park bench, and I pass many other homes that have boarded up windows and doors. I know I have seen these all before, but I can't help but think that with all of my newly found free time that I can now begin to make a bigger difference.

The first few hours of the school day fly past like a speeding bullet train, almost so fast that I forget I am even hungry for lunch until there are only 5 minutes left of my lunch break before I am back on the go for the last few remaining hours of the day. I quickly grabbed a bag of popcorn that was left in the drawer of my desk from the last data celebration we had. The one where most of my students weren't able to attend, so I snuck a few bags back to my room for them anyway. While it pops, I casually join in a conversation with the other teachers in the breakroom. The conversations I tend to avoid, but alas here I had to sit for at least the next 2 minutes and 23 seconds. The first thing I hear reminds me of why I tend to avoid these conversations.

Camilla, a 4th grade reading teacher says "I really need to go back to school. I need that pay increase if I'm going to be able to buy a house anytime soon."

Sandra chimes in almost immediately with "You should do the same program as me and Sarah. It's really easy! I haven't even needed to buy the book yet, and I should be done by the end of the year."

Camilla responds with "Wow that sounds great!"

My heart skips a beat as I listen silently to their conversation. My heart is pounding as these teachers discuss their own future and the future knowledge, they will use to teach the students in our school. Knowing my own experience in teacher education, and having learned the importance of learning and understanding critical education and not just simply getting another degree as a way to commodify my own knowledge, I begin to get angry that this is what many teachers would prefer. Previous similar conversations replay in my mind and the cold sweat of my anger at not saying something before makes my heart begin to pound even harder in my chest. Finally, I fight the fear and interject into the conversation.

"Would reading and engaging in learning be so bad? We are always telling our students the importance of learning. Shouldn't we do the same?"

Kelly, a first-year teacher interjects with "I've never thought about it like that before."

I talk for about a minute about my own experiences in teacher education and the critical knowledge and education I have been able to gain in recent years. In talking I am feeling liberated. I am hopeful that I will convince even one teacher to begin wanting to have more of these conversations at lunch. I begin to think about how nice it would be to have another critical educator in my school, even if it were for a lunch break conversation. I am suddenly interrupted by the not-so-subtle DING of the microwave. With only 2 minutes left to scarf down the bag of popcorn, I grab it from the microwave and head toward the door. I leave the room with the comment "let me know if you want me to talk to you more about my experiences and teacher education programs that are really impactful."

As I leave the room, I hear Camilla return to the original conversation by saying, "I just need to make some more money. Sandra, what's the name of the place that you are going to? Is it expensive? Can you tell me which classes are easiest to take?"

My heart begins pounding again as I run to my next class. This is exactly what I thought would happen. My fear of failure to convince someone, and the fear of rejection creeps back in until later that night. Just as I finish with dinner my phone buzzes. To my surprise it's a text from the new teacher Kelly asking more about critical education and pedagogies. We agreed to meet for a drink after school the next day to talk more. As I'm talking about what I have learned, I can feel Kelly experiencing similar anger at her own teacher education program as I have had previously. I comforted her to assure her that I had felt similar anger as well. I tell her about my dissertation work and offer to let her read it if she is interested. I tell her my work can lead her to the work of other scholars more knowledgeable than myself, because I too am still continuously learning.

Over the next few months, she reads my work and the work of others that I reference and draw understanding from. We began having those lunch break conversations I had longed for the remainder of the school year, both of us learning and growing in our critical education journey together. We talk about ways that we can put the theories we are reading into praxis in our own schools, classrooms, and communities. We talk about activism, social movements, and how we as teachers can be a part of those, especially in our district that has increasingly made it more difficult to openly discuss the issues of race and sexuality with our students.

As the school year comes to a close Kelly and I make plans to start a summer book club where we will read the works of bell hooks and Paulo Freire. As we are talking about the book club before a staff meeting Amy and Donna chime in that they have been wanting to join a book club for a long time as well. By the time of the first gathering a few weeks later there were eight teachers who had decided to join and read the first book with us. Some teachers were from our school, and others were friends who taught at other schools in the district. The first book we read

together is bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom.*

As I read the book again in preparation for our conversation, I am struck by hook's words when she writes "I have been most inspired by those teachers who have had the courage to transgress those boundaries that would confine each pupil to a rote, assembly-line approach to learning" (hooks, 1994, p. 13). Her words remind me of that conversation in the break room some many months ago at this point, especially as I look around the room at now a small group of teachers who may be willing to transgress with me. It also reminded me of the fear I had felt at that moment. I had spoken, but felt dismissed. My voice, although at the time I felt rejection, had been heard, and now just because I had made my voice heard, a small group of teachers were about to engage in critical conversations.

While the fear is not always gone, it seems much smaller now knowing there are peers and colleagues on my side. The book club continued that summer. Some of the teachers decided not to return after the first book because they felt that talking about racism and sexism was uncomfortable and 'devise', but others who enjoyed the reading and discussion invited a friend to the next gathering. That summer the book club grew in numbers, grew in community, and ultimately became more than a book club. As we read about teachers who were committed to activism for their students, parents, and communities we began engaging in conversations about how we could do that. One teacher who was especially influential in shifting our book club into a teacher activist group was Donna. After reading Banks (2014), Donna knew that specific changes needed to be made in our local school policies to ensure that all students were cared for within the school space. She shared the Banks (2014) quote below with the group:

> Your school district needs to develop a policy on multicultural and global
>
> education. It works best when this policy is communicated to school district staff

and to the public in a policy statement. The policy statement should clearly
communicate the board of education's commitment to creating and maintaining
schools in which students from both gender groups, LGBT students, and students
from diverse racial, ethnic, social class, cultural, and language groups will have an
equal opportunity to learn. (p. 127)

We knew that working towards creating a policy like this would become the focal point of what we would be doing throughout the next school year. Our first obstacle was getting the school board's approval to begin this work. We got the word out that we were going to propose the changes at the next meeting. I had attended a few board meetings before this one, but never had I seen so many people in attendance at a meeting before. Teachers, parents, students, community activists who wanted to work collectively to create this new policy that would specifically lay out ways that teachers, parents, administrators, and students would engage in teaching and learning that would be gender, racial, ethnically, language, and culturally affirming were there. There were also many teachers, parents, and community members that opposed the new policies that we wanted to create because we wanted to specifically mention these issues. They believed what we wanted to do would "divide the community". Ultimately the board listened to the voices that were the loudest, the parents who said they would take their tax dollars to private schools, or would start a new charter school if this policy were to be put in place. I left that meeting, as many others did, deflated and unsure what to do next.

The morning after the board meeting my principal called me into her office. My heart sank to the floor anytime my name was called over the intercom, and it felt even scarier this time. That fear was especially rampant after speaking so openly at the board meeting the previous night. I just knew this was the end of my career. I had spoken too loudly and was now

going to face the repercussions. Much to my surprise however, she told me how proud she was of me for standing up for the betterment of our students. She let me know that we could still make some school-based changes to better match the needs of our students, parents, and the community we serve.

This isn't what we had planned for, but it was a great first step. I invited all of the teachers to attend and make these plans. We also knew that teachers were not the only voices that needed to be heard from when creating these changes. We recognized that parents, students, community members, and more would need to be a part of this work. We created student groups to hear their voices on what they wanted to change. They demanded less testing. We also had some teachers who were active in political canvassing to register people to vote, and they went door to door in the neighborhoods surrounding the school to ask parents to attend planning meetings, or to get their thoughts there on the spot. They wanted more teachers and staff from the neighborhood to work at the school. Our school was the first to create an inclusive statement and school-based policies, but many other schools in the district began to follow suit. It wasn't long until major changes began to be made to policies at the board level as well. Myself, the other teachers, a lot of parents, and a surprising number of students were able to fight our fears and were making our community and schools a better place to learn.

Dreams of youth: Once an activist, always an activist

Anna was just 5 years old when she went to her first protest. She looked around in awe as she saw women with big signs, many of which she couldn't read at the time. Even though she didn't fully understand the reasons for why her mothers had brought her to that park that day, she could feel that it was important. Her parents always told her "If it's wrong, say or do something". Anna learned at a young age that fighting against oppression was a passion of hers. She

continued to go to protests with her parents throughout her childhood and adolescence. She frequented the Women's March, Black Lives Matter protests, March for our Lives, and Pride Parades. This is why it came as little surprise to her parents when she was suspended for skipping school, the irony not lost on Anna or her parents. Anna had begun skipping school every Friday her freshman year of high school to strike for climate change. Anna learned quickly that she got in less trouble from the school when more students attended. She then decided to try to get her peers to join her, and many did. Anna had an activist heart and was always willing to say and do something when she knew it was wrong or oppressive.

As Anna's time in high school came to a close, she was unsure of what her next path would be. Her parents knew not to be too concerned, as they had always known Anna's potential. Anna wasn't sure what she wanted to do, but she knew she wanted to make a difference no matter how big or small. The only thing standing in her way of learning what her next passion would be was the SAT. She couldn't even believe she had to take it. She knew it was an antiquated test because one of Anna's moms had told her throughout her life why these tests were harmful. Anna didn't even understand why she and her peers were still being subjected to it.

Anna begrudgingly sat behind a computer screen in a quiet room with 30 of her peers on an early Saturday morning. She watched as the boy sitting next to her quickly tapped his foot against the desk out of nerves. The testing proctor gave her a bag of earplugs to drown out any noise, although the only thing she could hear were the clicks of a mouse. Anna was in her last year of high school and had never taken one of these tests before. In fact, none of the schools in the city had taken these tests in a long time. Some of the kids in that room hadn't taken any standardized tests before, but the universities and colleges that they were applying to were not as

caring. They needed numbers. Anna needed a number to ensure she could handle higher education. Anna decided that she would use this opportunity to make a stand. She convinced a few of her friends to do a test walk out.

After the proctor said "you may begin", Anna chose 'c' for every answer and in each of the short answer and essay portions she wrote "I am more than a number". She and her peers finished in what the proctor said was record time. The proctor scolded them for not taking it seriously and ruining their future, but Anna didn't care because she knew that her worth is more than any number the computer could have given her. She wrote a letter to each college and university that she was applying to letting them know why she refused to be reduced to a number. She found out a few months later that she had been accepted to multiple places and the decision on her future was not up to her and not the testing corporation, although they did make a few hundred dollars off of her either way. Anna didn't care much about the loss of money because she had learned from her parents and teachers that learning for learning's sake was the most important part of schooling.

She took this want for learning with her into her higher education experience as well. The decision of which school she would attend was not one that she made based off of a sports team, or even off of which school had the best amenities. For Anna it was about the learning she could accomplish there. She read professor bios online, read about the different research that was conducted through the schools, and ultimately made her decision. A few months later she was off to her new home. As she moved into the dorms she met new friends, some from big cities, others from small towns. What she came to see quickly however was that many of her peers had a very different experience than her own before getting here. She realized that unlike her own community many of them did not attend protests, almost all of them had taken standardized tests

for the bulk of the K-12 experience, and some even went to private and charter schools which had not been allowed in her city. On one of her first days at the school she heard many conversations that scared her.

"I got a 1600 on the SATs."

"I'll be done in 4 years. I mean what are they going to do, fail me? My dad is paying too much for these classes and will sue if I don't pass."

"I heard their business degree is the easiest, so that's probably what I'll major in"

Each new comment surprised Anna. Each one went against everything Anna believed about schooling, education, and knowledge. She began to ask herself: can I fit in here? Should I just be here for a degree? The fear quickly subsided however, because Anna was strong and passionate. She knew deep down that learning for learning's sake would always be important. Over the next few years Anna would take classes in the sciences, in philosophy, in law, and in almost everything she could. Somewhere in the middle her passion for learning grew bigger and bigger. She wanted to ensure that more of her peers were able to attend schools like the one she did growing up and not just schools where test scores were the most important. She decided education would be for her, so that she could always continue learning. She began to look at the teacher education program at her school, and was relieved when she realized that the program did not require her to submit a final portfolio to edTPA, but rather she would submit one to the professors in the department for scoring.

When Anna began taking classes she realized quickly that much of the course content in her classes went in opposition to what she had learned through her own K-12 schooling. She told her peers how high-stakes testing was almost nonexistent in the schools back home, how they used activism as a part of learning, and how standards may have been taught but she never knew

what they were growing up. Some of the future teachers in the room were shocked about this, and even some of the teacher educators were skeptical.

One of the future teachers in her class said, "How did your teachers even know you were learning the content without the tests?"

"Yeah. I mean testing is a main part of teaching. I don't even understand how you don't do it." another teacher added.

Anna asserted "Well we never did. We did a lot of our learning through community service projects. I definitely want to be the kind of teacher that I had growing up."

The professor chimed into the conversation with "that sounds lovely, but many places won't let you teach like that. They will give you the curriculum and you just read it. You will need to be prepared to teach that way as well."

Anna rejected the notion and said "Well, that won't be me".

Anna continued to resist that kind of preparation throughout the remainder of her program. Finally at the end of the program it was time for Anna to take the teacher performance assessment. Many of her peers prepared and studied for the teacher assessment, but Anna didn't. She had told herself a few years ago when she walked out of that testing room on that Saturday morning, that she wouldn't do it again. Having such a passion for and reverence for the way she was able to experience K-12 education, she knew that going back home to continue the work those teachers, parents, students, and community members had started was what she would do.

One of her best friends in the program told her "Just take the test. What's the worst that can happen."

Another spoke behind her back, although Anna heard about it later, "That hippy will never find a job. I wouldn't let my kid have a teacher who hadn't passed the test."

Anna held strong in her convictions and skipped the teacher exam, but once she returned home, she was finding it more challenging than expected to begin her teaching career. While her home city had been able to support the opting out of state tests for students, they still required the test scores for their teachers. Anna decided that these tests should not be the sole deciding factor on who is able to work in the local schools. She brings up this concern with a principal in the community and a few of the other teachers currently working in the district. Anna spent the next few years working in a grassroots effort to challenge the hiring processes in the district. She worked with parents, teachers, administrators, and district leaders to help create impactful changes.

Major changes were made to the hiring process in this district based on the activism work that Anna had led with the help of local teachers, parents, and other community members. Parents became more involved in the hiring process ensuring that teachers who would be teaching in their community understood the social issues that impacted that community. The issues that were important to parents that had not been part of the hiring process was an understanding of a lack of housing, environmental justice, income inequality, food scarcity, as well as fighting for racial equity. Parents also made their voices heard that they wanted the teachers who worked in their schools to be part of their community as well, making sure that the teachers were living in the communities that they teach in. The current teachers in the schools wanted to make sure that future teachers were understanding of the decision for no high-stakes tests or scripted curriculums, since many teacher education programs still engrained those practices. The hiring policies also added ongoing learning about democratic schools and a multitude of critical pedagogies. The community had become even more driven to ensure that democratic and liberating practices were embedded throughout the schools and community there.

Once Anna felt that her work in transforming the hiring process was complete, she finally felt that it was time for her to have her own classroom. She quit her job at the local bike shop where she had worked the past few years while being an activist. She went through the new hiring process, the one she had helped to create, and finally she got the keys to her new classroom on a sunny day in August. She was excited to start this new leg of her journey in education. Anna spent much of her first year teaching doing much more learning than she expected. She learned about her role as teacher in a democratic classroom and school. She learned that her students, like her at their age, were very active in social justice movements and issues. She also learned that teaching in this way was much more challenging than she expected. She spent many lunch breaks in the teachers' lounge asking for help, suggestions, or just listening.

Ms. Lowis, one of the 3rd grade teachers said, "My students are working on writing letters to the city commissioners about the damaging effects of the chemical plant on their neighborhood, and I have read a lot of work on environmental justice, but is there anything else that you all think I could read that may help me to help them on this?"

Mr. Rotham began by saying "I think it will be really important for you to look at racism's impact on why the chemical plant was built in this neighborhood and not another, Pauline Lipman's work may help you understand that a bit more."

Anna chimes in "I can't believe we are still having to deal with this. I skipped almost every Friday of school in high school protesting for climate change and to have that plant moved out of town."

"Oh wow, would you want to come talk to my class about those experiences?" said Ms. Lowis.

"I don't know. I feel like I'm struggling with my own class, so I don't want to mess yours up too."

"No way! You are doing great. What are you and your students working on right now? Maybe we can help."

The teachers sat for what felt like a long time talking about different projects, scholars, and student work. Each teacher provided different contexts based on their own theoretical frameworks. Mr. Rotham always made sure that they consider the racial context, Ms. Grenitch the gender context, Ms. Lowis the context of ability, and Mr. Milner wants to make sure that the role that heteronormativity plays in the issues is considered as well. Ms. Pope is always considering the role that neoliberalism and the capitalist structure plays, and Ms. Holt makes sure that Indigenous perspectives are remembered as well. As the conversation continued Anna found that she was adding a new voice to the group of teachers. As one of the youngest on the staff, she knew the importance of fighting against climate change. She could now add this voice of environmental justice for the students at the school. Anna left to teach the rest of the day feeling energized and ready to do more important work.

When the school year came to a close Anna went on to work that summer again at the local bike shop. She continued to be an activist throughout her career in teaching. After her sixth year of teaching however Anna had discovered a new passion. Each new year she noticed that new teachers were coming to their school completely unprepared to teach and learn in democratic schools when diverse forms of critical pedagogies were implemented. She felt the calling for teacher education. Soon she was hired at the community college in the teacher education department and was able to work with many of the future teachers for her city. Her bravery to speak against oppression in both its biggest and smallest forms continued to be

inspiring to her colleagues in education and to her students for the remainder of her career.

<p style="text-align:center">Dreams of change: We want better for our children</p>

Taylor always wanted better for her little boy. That's why she and her husband have always let him be himself and have spent time each night reading with him. Raymond has always been an inquisitive, loving, and caring little kid because of it. Taylor takes a picture of Raymond on his first day of kindergarten as he holds a sign that says "Class of 2050". She just knew this would be a great post on *ParEnt*, the social media network for parents that Taylor joined shortly after finding out she was pregnant with Raymond. It was a tradition on the site to post these first day pictures, and then post it again with a side-by-side picture in a cap and gown. Everyone always loved them. As she walks him into school on the first day she sees little chairs, tiny cubbies with each kid's name on them, and so many bright colors that the teacher has decorated the room with. Almost as soon as the classroom door opens, Raymond has begun coloring and laughing with some of the other students. There were some familiar friends from around the block as well. Taylor tells Raymond that she will see him at 2:30. She stands quietly at the front door of the classroom for a few minutes just watching Raymond with his new friends, taking a few more pictures of course. As she left the building she shed a few tears, because her baby is now growing up. It was only a few tears however, because she knew Raymond would be okay.

After the first month of school Taylor gets an email from Raymond's teacher that they need a conference to discuss both his behavior and his scores on a test they took recently. At the conference, Raymond's teacher tells Taylor that he is too energetic. She also told her that he scored well below the class average on the kindergarten standardized tests that the school had taken that month.

Ms. Pitts said "He's a sweet kid, but he can't seem to sit still for the whole time during

the 45-minute math lesson, and really struggles with the 60 minutes of reading lessons each day."

Taylor responds "60 minutes? That's a long time for anyone to be sitting still. They're just kids!"

"I know, but there is nothing we can do. This is what we have to teach each day." She paused for a brief second and then added "I also have to let you know that Raymond is a 117."

"What's that mean?"

"Well, we took the beginning of the year test last week and Raymond was a 117. It's actually why I needed to talk with you today. That means he is in danger of not ever learning to read, graduating, or going to college and getting a good job."

"I thought a 100 was good?"

"Not any more. Raymond should be a 167 by now."

"But it's only the first few weeks of kindergarten."

"Yeah, school is just so much harder now than when we were in school! These new standards just keep getting more and more rigorous. We will take the test again next month, and hopefully Raymond improves."

The conversation continues as Taylor becomes more and more upset. She kept remembering the first day when he was coloring and laughing. Now he was failing? She just couldn't believe it.

Ms. Pitts tells Taylor as she walks out of the conference "I'm sure Raymond will be fine. He just might be a bad test taker, and will need to work on those skills if he wants to be successful."

As Taylor leaves the school this time, she sheds more than just a few tears for her son's future. Taylor rejects this idea that her child will only be successful based on a test score. When

she got home that night she cried more. She begins to look into how she can keep Raymond from taking more of these tests. She discovers that her district doesn't have a policy for opting out of the tests. Taylor spends the next few days thinking of what she can do.

Later in the week Taylor met up with her friend Day at the park. Taylor tells Day about the conference with Raymond's teacher. Day's baby was in 2nd grade and she expressed similar frustration. She told Taylor "We've been dealing with that for a few years now. They keep telling me she's a 165 or a 213. This year it was 193. I keep telling them my baby is more than a number."

"But don't you ever want to try to do more? It seems like such a waste of their school time. They take these once a month?"

"Yeah, it's all so stupid, but we can't do anything about it. They make your kid go to summer and Saturday school if they don't take them. Alicia looked into it a while back with Jaden."

Taylor left the park both more upset, but also a little more comforted that she wasn't alone in her frustration. Later that night she posted a video about her frustrations to *ParEnt*. Her video went triple viral, and so many other parents gave her advice about what she could do. By the next morning the video had become so popular on the site that some of the other parents at Raymond's school saw her in carpool the next day and bragged that they knew a *ParEnt* star. She used her new found social media fame to gather a group of local parents to voice their concerns about the testing. Her videos became viral sensations. Taylor became so popular on the app that they began paying her. Everyone knew her and wanted to get famous on *ParEnt* too, so a lot more parents in the community opted their students out of the tests by the end of that school year. So many in fact that the school system had to reverse the summer school and Saturday school

decision because there would not be enough teachers to teach them.

Taylor knew that using her social media in this way was not how she had intended it. She had started with wanting to get parenting tips and advice, but now she had to keep making more and more content. After about a year of creating content on opting out, she was given platinum parent status on the App. With the new status, she was making so much money making content that she had to quit her job at the local newspaper in order to keep up with the content demands. Some days she felt defeated, but others she saw the benefit. With each new video or picture, she posted, she thought to herself "At least more and more kids weren't being reduced to a number, right?"

Taylor continued to be popular on the app for a few more years. She even went on to make even more changes to the district's schooling policies because of her fame. Five or so years after her original video, the school system didn't require testing anymore and was in the process of challenging the scripted curriculum and educational technology they were using in the schools. It was around this time that Taylor's phone malfunctioned. She had paid for the ultra-mega storage, but it crashed and it took a few days to get it fixed. By the time it was fixed and she logged back into *ParEnt*, she had lost her platinum parent status. Another parent at Raymond's school had taken over as platinum parent. Taylor was initially upset, and for the next week tried to regain the role, but she was unsuccessful in her efforts. One afternoon a few weeks later as she saw the new platinum parent filming at carpool, Taylor let out a sigh of relief. Since becoming a platinum parent she had spent less and less time with Raymond. In fact, that afternoon would be the first since kindergarten that Taylor didn't film Raymond when she picked him up from school.

She decided that she could continue being part of the opting out movement even if she

wasn't on the app. She, Day, and a lot of other parents spent the remaining 18 years of their kids

schooling being very involved. When Raymond ultimately walked across the stage at graduation

in the Spring of 2050, Taylor was one of the few parents who didn't post the side-by-side picture

onto *ParEnt* that day. She instead sat in the audience and shed just a few more tears because she

knew she had made a difference not only in Raymond's life, but in many of the other lives

walking across the stage as well. She knew which ones she had touched by whether they were

called by name or by number. Each person called by name, just like her baby Raymond, had

opted out of testing. As she watched each kid walk by, and as each parent took their videos, she

was proud of the number of kids who walked across to their names and not their number.

<center>Dreams of bravery: Resisting dystopia</center>

I woke up like any other day, although I did not sleep very well last night. Today was

going to be a big day. It was the first day of school, and as the veteran teacher I was now the

person in charge of the control switches. This is a big responsibility, and what every teacher

aspires to. The biggest responsibility on the control switch is the play button. The play button

starts the 8-hour video lesson each day, and if it is not pushed at the exact right moment, then

there is no lesson that day. The schools pay a lot of money for these lessons, but if they are not

activated at the exact right moment, they have to be purchased again. Being given this

responsibility is the height of my teaching career. Along with the play button, some of the other

responsibilities of the control switches allowed me better control over the bodies. I could make

sure each body was paying attention, looking at the lesson, sitting up straight, and actively

listening. The whole school was going to fall on me for the first time. This was a real leadership

position that showed I am the most responsible and reliable teacher in the school. The nerves of

such a big day had gotten to me and sleeping was a little difficult, and now to top off the morning

I couldn't find my keys. My keys were everything that day. They held my fingerprints and my face scanner that I needed in order to get into the school and to access the control switches. I looked everywhere I thought they were, and in a desperate final attempt to not be late to work I yelled to my husband who is still half asleep.

"Hun! Have you seen my keys?"

In a sleepy voice he recalls back to me "Keys? Yeah, I put them in your bag when I found them on the couch last night."

Panic ensues when I finally find them in my bag, but my fingerprints and face scanner are missing. I think to myself this can't be happening right now. The biggest day of my teaching career is upon me, and I lose the two things I need to be able to teach. My biggest fear is coming true. I'm entrusted with the control switch and the play button and now I won't even be able to press it. My whole teaching career has led to this moment and here I stand in my kitchen without the things I need.

My husband ascends the stairs and stops me before I start crying.

"Did you find them?"

"Yeah, but my fingerprints and face scanner are missing."

"What's missing?"

"My fingerprints and face scanner" I yell at him more sternly. "I'm in charge of pressing play today! I need them to access the control switches."

"Pressing play? That ended years ago, and we haven't needed those fingerprints and face scanners for years either."

Confused, I wanted to wake myself from the nightmare that I thought was ensuing. I listened for a few minutes as my husband talked about the anti-neoliberalism movement of the

last decade. I realize at this moment that this may not be a nightmare at all, but rather it may just be the greatest dream I could have ever imagined. I had heard murmurs of the anti-neoliberalism movement, mostly through the media, and a lot of it sounded like fear mongering. The media outlets referred to them as anti-American. Much of what I heard about the movement was that the protests and policies were mostly being enacted in major cities. I hadn't thought much about it, because they had little to do with me and my day-to-day life. Having woken up in what seemed like the future, I became more curious about what this version of my life could look like. I grab my keys from the bottom of the bag again, and begin the day, as I assume I always do, by heading to work.

One thing was different from the moment I left my house. I see public transit stations, the ones that were rundown and turned into murals, are now back in service. Hydro and solar powered scooters and trains are more visible on the streets than anything else. As I walk toward the station, I notice a plaque that tells of the 2145 natural disasters. The plaque described the simultaneous tornado, hurricane, flood, and fire that left the country in peril. It was after this that gas and oil companies were found guilty of crimes against climate and humanity. It was said that this was one of the first major wins of the anti-neoliberalism movement. I decided to embrace the change and hop on a scooter to get to work.

When I arrive at the school, I notice some major differences there as well. The first being the huge electrical fence around the building and the parking lot were gone. The security cameras along the side of the building and the metal detector, face scanner, and fingerprint scanner at the front of the building were gone as well. I later learned that the anti-neoliberalism movement of the 40s made sure that the tech corporations, along with their sister companies of the testing regime, were the first to go in schools. I make my way to the front door of the school, and when I

walk through the front door I am greeted by my colleagues. I quickly saw that the cameras and scanners were not the only differences that this school had. As I walked through the school, I could see the remnants of classrooms, although I could tell that they are not used in the way that I know them to be used. As I walk into one of the classrooms, I realize the room's Learning Monitor (™) is gone. I walked into the next room, and again the Learning Monitor (™) was gone in that room as well. I walk through three more rooms and begin to panic as none of them have Learning Monitors (™). How will we teach if there are no Learning Monitors (™)? I wondered quickly about the control switches, but changed my train of thought because I couldn't bear the fear of their absence as well. As I continue to look around the school for reminders of the schooling that I know I finally find one Learning Monitor (™). It is near the center of the school, and at first my heart skipped a beat of joy. There is hope that learning could happen here since there is still a Learning Monitor (™). The hope fades pretty quickly however, because as I approach it closer, I see that it has been painted over with the words "our why". Next to the monitor is a plaque that reads:

> "This is our why. In the year 2142, our school was very different. It was through the hard work of many dedicated teachers, students, parents, the community, and society at large that we are no longer subjected to screens, tests, or standards for learning. We will no longer allow corporations to dictate what and how we learn. Neoliberalism will no longer prevail in our schools, and we will not soon return to that time. One final Learning Monitor remains to remind us what we never want learning to return to. We must always be better than this. We thank those before us who dared to dream better, and we will always continue to be better in our fight against oppression. This plaque is dedicated to

those teachers who stood up and chose to resist for the good of the school, students, and community."

I read the plaque over and over. I read it for what felt like a long time, but it must have only been a few minutes because soon I was surrounded by the bodies who were now pouring into the hallways. The fear and trepidation kicks in as I think to myself who is with the control switches. I also panic because without Learning Monitors (™) I have no idea what I am going to do for the next 8 hours. The feelings subside when almost just as quickly I hear another adult yell my name.

"Hey Alex, are you going to reminisce all day or are you coming to class."

I half smile and walk her way, assuming that is where I must need to be. I was still scared that I have no idea what or how I am going to teach without the control switches. When I get to where the other teacher is, she asks me "Are you excited for our new group?"

"Yeah, I always love the first day of school and getting to see all the new bodies."

"Bodies? This isn't 2140!"

"Oh yeah I mean students."

"Yeah, this year's scholars are supposed to be a great bunch."

Soon our area fills with kids of all age groups. Some are very young and others much older. This confused me yet again, so I turned to who I now know to be Mrs. Pérez ask "What grade are we teaching this year?"

She looks at me confused again and asks "Are you feeling okay? You know we don't do grades anymore. Remember you were the one who worked with the parents to start this a few years back?"

I tell her that I am just confused because I didn't sleep well the night before. She continued to look at me puzzled and finally went on to explain that the students in this school are no longer grouped by age or numbers, but rather they are grouped by their passions. She tells me that she and I teach this group together because our passions are history and the anti-neoliberalism movement. She goes on to tell me that each group works to complete an activist project before they are able to move to work on a new passion. She explains that schooling here was created for knowledge, not for testing. Students, teachers, administrators, and parents encourage learning for learning's sake and not for monetary gain. There are no standards, there are no tests, there are just people exploring passions, deciding and implementing liberating policies, and working together for the goals of teaching, learning, and social justice. My fears begin to ease slightly the more she talks about this kind of schooling.

Soon I hear one of the older students say to me "Good morning Ms. A. I'm glad to see you again. This passion is always my favorite of the year."

"Good to see you again as well" I reply to him. Knowing a little more about the way schooling works here, I realize that the students here aren't just bodies that absorb the information on the screens, but rather actively participate. I do something I would never do at my other school. I ask him a question.

"What makes this your favorite?"

He responds quicker than I thought with "I think history and learning about the anti-neoliberalism movement is important because school then seemed so drab. I would hate for my own experience to be like that. Learning about the rise and fall of neoliberalism is important to ensure it doesn't happen again."

As I listened to him talk, I was more and more impressed. In my school students were never asked about what they liked. Any question that the videos asked students had to have an answer, and that answer had to match what the computer said. If they didn't have one of the prescribed answers then they were wrong. Open ended questions would have never been part of schooling because answers could vary too much. I told him that I was glad to hear about his passions, and that I was delighted to get to learn more alongside him throughout the day and during our time together this year.

As the day went on, I met more scholars, all of whom were able to answer questions in similar ways as the first boy. Some even asked me questions, which I found even more shocking. I also met more teachers throughout the day. They talked about the scholars and the work they were doing outside of school. It was very different from any conversation I had ever had with other teachers at work. No one was asking about how to make sure that the bodies stayed still to watch the lessons. No one talked about going back to school to learn how to work on the hardware of the lessons to make sure that technical malfunctions didn't happen. In fact, the one time a teacher did talk about going back to school to learn she talked about how she went back to take some classes on classical dance, because some of the scholars had expressed interest in learning classical music and dance and she wanted to learn more with them.

The day ended up going by very quickly. My passion group decided that they wanted to learn more about the role that small cities like their own had in the anti-neoliberalism movement. They made plans for how they were going to learn over the next few weeks and by the time it was time to go home some of the older students made plans to stay a bit later because they were just too invested in what they were reading at the time. I felt very much in the same mindset of these students. I felt like I never wanted the day to end. This had been my first day of school

without a Learning Monitor (™) or control switches, and it had been exhilarating. I had to find the courage to leave. After walking past the last Learning Monitor (™) one last time, I got back on the scooter and rode to the public transit station next to my house. When I got home, I told my husband all about the first day. I told him about the interactions with peers, colleagues, and the scholars, and how it was the best first day of school ever. He asserted "I'm glad you had a great first day, but it doesn't sound very different from most other days you tell me about."

I thought to myself how could this not be a different day? Can it really be this great every day? After coming down from the high of the morning, I spent much of the rest of the day trying to learn about what else was different about this strange place I found myself in this morning. I read the local paper, listened to public radio, took a walk around town, and read the descriptions of the many books on the bookshelf in my house. I discovered that large corporations are no longer considered people and therefore can be subjected to regulation again, and could even be charged with crimes of oppression. Churches were now required to pay taxes after it was uncovered that they committed election campaign fraud across the country. For-profit hospitals and prisons are now obsolete, seemingly because of their role in committing crimes of oppression as well. Higher education was open to all and was separate from job training. Schools on a nationwide level were teaching in similar ways to the school I had been to that day. Scholars weren't required to learn about any one standard, there were no tests, technology was kept at a minimum, and teachers were not regulated to teaching a specific curriculum. The more I read the more my mind began to dream about this being my reality. I had never realized how much better society and schools could be if it weren't for neoliberalism.

The more I read and learned the more exhilarated I was. This place had felt like a nightmare this morning, but now it felt more like a dream that I never wanted to awaken from. I

had hoped if I fell asleep, I could wake back up here instead of back in my old life. The last thing I did before bed was pick up a book off the shelf to read. I had wanted to do this since most of the books in my house had been surrendered in 2124 for having "divisive content". When I saw the massive bookshelf in my house here, I knew I wanted to read something. I picked up what my husband said was a book I hadn't read in years, although he also claimed it was one of my favorites. I only read a little, but it was about the impact that neoliberalism has on society. Unfortunately, I did the one thing I had hoped I wouldn't, and it was fall asleep and wake up from the dream into what I now realized was the real nightmare.

I awoke to the sound of my husband yelling "Hun! Remember you can't be late today. The whole school is counting on you."

I got up in a hurry and drank my coffee as we watched the morning news. One particular news story was talking about a radical group of teachers who had gone the last 2 weeks refusing to play their lessons. Some bodies have even refused to complete their lessons and tests as well. The media referred to them as "outright shameful teachers who didn't care at all about their bodies."

I was both terrified and excited about what the teachers had done. My husband chimed in "Oh yeah! I keep hearing about this. It's the anti-neolibs. Apparently, these teachers just stopped pressing play. The parents and students are going along with it as well. They are just teaching what they want. No regulation or anything. They seem pretty interesting. I know I hated those monitors when I had to go back and take that one coding class. I don't think we have to worry though… that would never happen here."

I accidentally let out a "not never", but I don't think he heard me.

I was still in a fog all the way to work. I pulled through the huge metal gates and let the Security Guard (™) scan my faces and fingerprints. I scanned my face and fingerprints again to get in the building and walked toward the room with the control switches. Each step I took and with each "congratulations" and "good luck" I heard I thought more and more about those teachers I had seen on the news.

T-minus 7 minutes flashed across the Learning Monitor (™) as I walked into the control switch room. I am greeted with one final congratulations from the veteran teacher who was in charge of pressing play and the other control switches last year. Her final job as teacher is to hand the buttons to me in a special button passing ceremony. As we wait for the screen to tell us when to proceed, I nervously ask her if she had heard about those anti-neolib teachers.

"Yeah. They are all much braver than me. I'll say it now but if you had told me 40 years ago my only teaching would be pushing a button, I would have chosen a different career."

"What do you mean? This is how I learned in school and I grew up fine."

"It was just different then that's all. No need to worry about that now. What those teachers are doing would never happen here."

My heart skips a beat as T-minus 5 minutes flashes across the screen. We go on to perform the button passing ceremony and the control switches are now in my hands.

T-minus 2 minutes

I can feel myself begin to sweat as time seems to speed up.

T-minus 1 minute.

60 seconds.

59 seconds.

The time continues to flash across the screen as memories of those teachers on the news, of the scholars in my dream, of the bodies who would be watching this lesson all crisscross though my mind at once. I don't think I can do this. Since I was just a little body this is all I had wanted. I wanted to be the teacher in charge of play. I thought it would be the greatest honor I ever had as a teacher, but now as 22 seconds flashes across the screen I don't know what to do. Well, I do know what to do, but it goes against everything I've ever learned and dreamed of.

17 seconds.

They will fire me for this for sure.

12 seconds.

Can I do this?

6 seconds.

How can I not do this?

3 seconds.

My hand holds the button so tightly now I can feel my fingers turning red as I stare at the screen.

0 seconds.

My hands and the giant play button fall to my side as I hear screams coming from throughout the school. I smile for a few seconds as I think to myself about what I have just done. I'm hopeful it is a first step toward something better.

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