

*RE-VISUALIZING CARE:  
TEACHERS' INVISIBLE LABOR IN  
NEOLIBERAL TIMES*

BY

VICTORIA RESTLER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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# ABSTRACT

## RE-VISUALIZING CARE: TEACHERS' INVISIBLE LABOR IN NEOLIBERAL TIMES

BY  
VICTORIA RESTLER

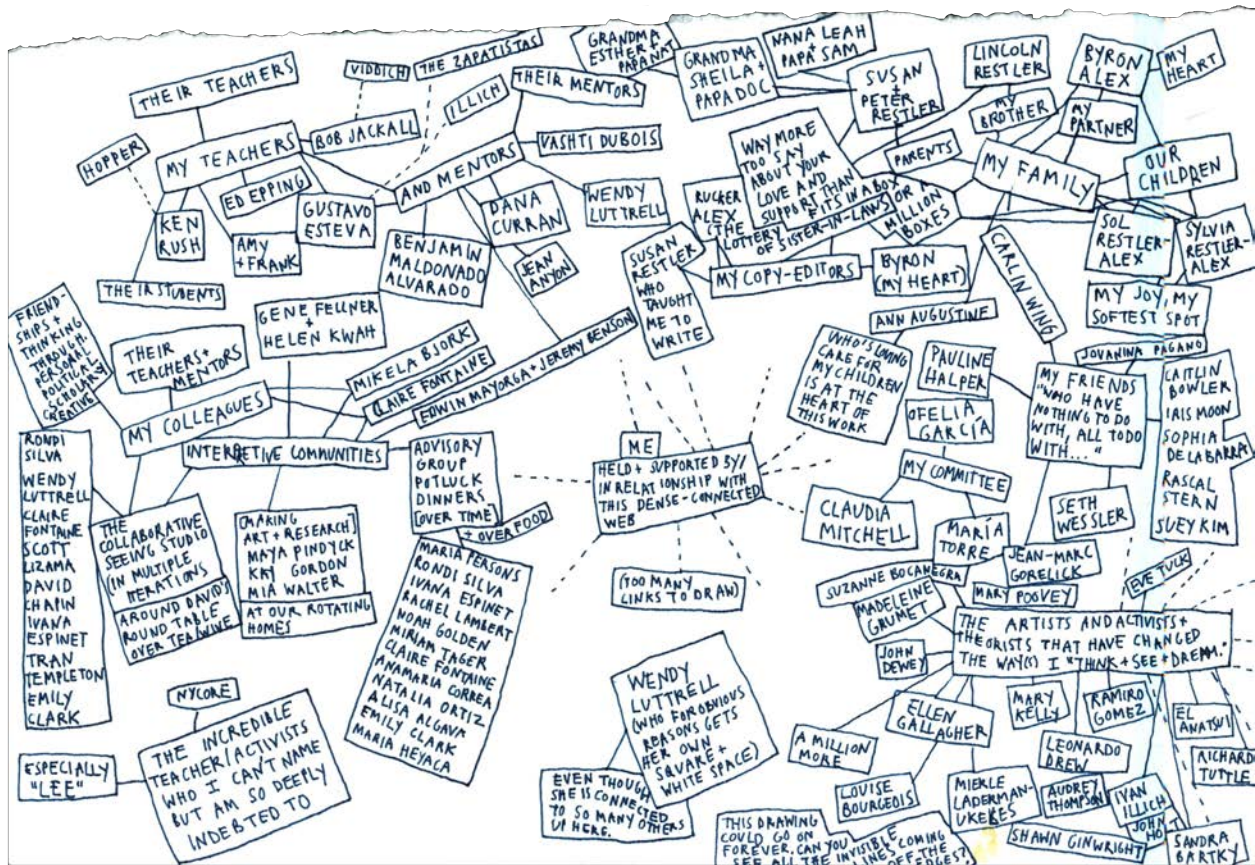
Advisor: Wendy Luttrell

*Re-visualizing care: Teachers' invisible labor in neoliberal times* takes up the topic of teacher evaluation in a moment of moral panic about “bad teachers,” public controversy over Value-Added Measures (VAM) of teacher work, and the widespread implementation of new assessment policies under Race to the Top (RTTT). Working with a group of ten progressive New York City public school teachers in the first year of one such policy (known as “Advance”), my multimodal study engages a wide variety of qualitative and arts-based research methods to explore teachers' experiences of “Advance,” their broader reflections on practice, and the substantial work they do that is not captured by evaluation metrics.

My research shines a light on teachers' invisible carework expanding our imagination of teacher labor, and calling out the mismatch between white, middle-class expectations and the actual demands placed on urban teachers. Bringing forward the unequal distribution of teachers' caring burdens and responsibilities across race/ class/ gender/ culture/ and language in urban schools, this research highlights teachers' carework as a significant (and under-researched) site for the social reproduction of school inequality. And my use of digital and visual methodologies in the print document and companion [digital assemblage](#), works to record and make visible the invisible work of teaching, thereby breaking through currently accepted quantitative images to see students, teachers and schools in their full humanity.

*For my mother, grandmother and great-grandmother,  
Susan Goldbloom Restler, Sheila Barshay Goldbloom,  
& Esther Reich Barshay Rothstein*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



My dissertation is all about carework and relationality and I am especially grateful for the care and work and love that has made my creative, scholarly labor possible.

Although my name appears underneath the title, this work is a collective effort. As I think back on the four years since I defended my dissertation proposal (with Sol in my belly), I am aware of countless acts of pedagogical generosity, mentorship, friendship, critique, and unglamorous “maintenance” work that have both shaped and enabled my research, writing, thinking, and making. This work lives in all the dinners-made, conversations, copy-edits, schlepping, the many people and emotions and logistics that “have nothing to with—all to with” the life and animation of this project (Sondheim 1970). I think about this as a kind of intellectual, emotional, relational

web of love, friendship, learning and labor—which I have depicted in a series of tiny letters and tumbling boxes in the drawing above.

I want to call out and express my gratitude to several people and groups of people in particular. Thank you to the brilliant teacher participants—V, Michelle, Amir, Rebecca, Sarah, Betty, Nisha, Eli, Phoebe, and especially my co-facilitator Lee—whom I cannot (really) name, but whose vision and insights and friendship are woven throughout the entirety of the project.

Thank you to my advisor, Wendy Luttrell for training me into this world of feminist, arts-based, social justice academic work. For bringing me into a model of mentorship rooted in love, care, relationships, and justice. This work is challenging and exciting and scary and I am grateful for all the times you sat by my side and supported me through “firsts,” and vulnerabilities, for your gentle (but firm) nudges, for your “straight up” feedback, for our deep friendship and kinship.

Thank you to my committee—Ofelia García, Claudia Mitchell, and María Torre. Your creative scholarship and fierce commitments to social justice are inspiring models.

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Thank you to my brother Lincoln who is also my best friend.

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## NOTE TO READERS: DIGITAL ASSEMBLAGE

In addition to the “print document,” my dissertation includes a companion website or digital assemblage. Presented on the digital publishing platform, Scalar, the website is organized around two groups of artworks together with two chapter-length texts. You can read/ view/ listen to the assemblage alongside the printed dissertation or once you’ve completed the text.

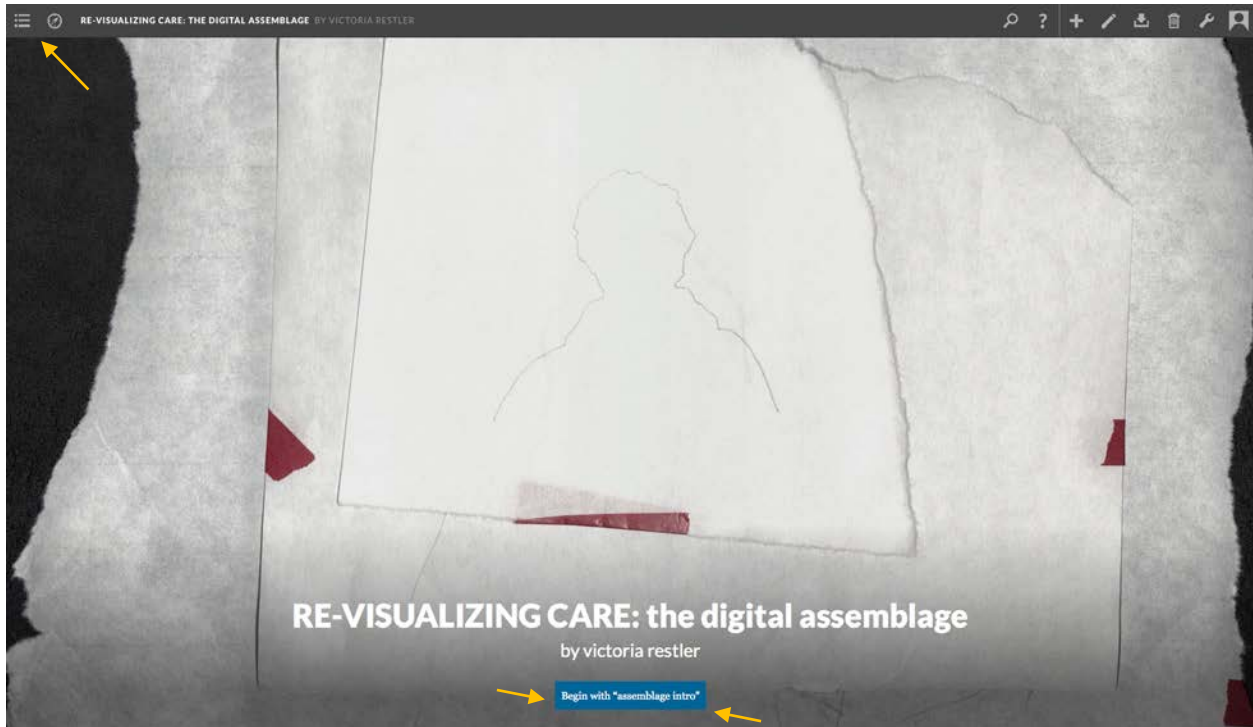



Figure 1. The digital assemblage homepage [screenshot]

To view the [digital assemblage](http://scalar.usc.edu/works/re-visualizing-care), click the hyperlinked text or copy and paste this web address into your browser (<http://scalar.usc.edu/works/re-visualizing-care>). The link will take you to the site’s homepage (Figure 1). Once there, you can click on the blue rectangles (indicated here with yellow arrows) at the bottom of each page to move through the site. To view the table of contents or travel to particular pages, hover your mouse over the three horizontal hash marks in the upper-left hand corner (also highlighted here with a yellow arrow). Please view the assemblage on a computer with a

*high-speed internet connection and please be patient with the site as sometimes the media take a few seconds to load.*

# val·ue

**/ˈvæljuː/** 

## noun

noun: **value**; plural noun: **values**

1. **the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something.**

"your support is of great value"

*synonyms:* **worth, usefulness, advantage, benefit, gain, profit, good, help, merit, helpfulness, avail;** [More](#)

- **the material or monetary worth of something.**

"prints seldom rise in value"

*synonyms:* **price, cost, worth;** [More](#)

- **the worth of something compared to the price paid or asked for it.**

"at \$12.50 the book is a good value"

2. **a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life.**

"they internalize their parents' rules and values"

*synonyms:* **principles, ethics, moral code, morals, standards, code of behavior**

"society's values are passed on to us as children"

3. **the numerical amount denoted by an algebraic term; a magnitude, quantity, or number.**

"the mean value of x"

4. **MUSIC**

**the relative duration of the sound signified by a note.**

5. **LINGUISTICS**

**the meaning of a word or other linguistic unit.**

• **the quality or tone of a spoken sound; the sound represented by a letter.**

6. **ART**

**the relative degree of lightness or darkness of a particular color.**

"the artist has used adjacent color values as the landscape recedes"

## verb

verb: **value**; 3rd person present: **values**; past tense: **valued**; past participle: **valued**; gerund or present participle: **valuing**

1. **estimate the monetary worth of (something).**

"his estate was valued at \$45,000"

*synonyms:* **evaluate, assess, estimate, appraise, price,** put/set a price on

"his estate was valued at \$345,000"

2. **consider (someone or something) to be important or beneficial; have a high opinion of.**

"she had come to value her privacy and independence"

*synonyms:* think highly of, have a high opinion of, hold in high regard, rate highly, **esteem,** set (great) store by, put stock in, **appreciate, respect;** [More](#)

• **cherished, treasured, dear, prized;**

**esteemed, respected, highly regarded, appreciated, important**

## Origin

**LATIN**

**OLD FRENCH**

valere → **valoir** → **value**  
be worth *Middle English*

Middle English: from Old French, feminine past participle of *valoir* 'be worth,' from Latin *valere*.

Translate value to

## Use over time for: value



 [Show less](#)

[Feedback](#)

Figure 2. Value definition [Google definitions]

# CHAPTER 1

## VALUE + EVALUATION

### *introduction*

In 2012 the New York City Department of Education (DOE) distributed individual performance rankings of 18,000 city school teachers to the media. After a protracted legal battle, a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed by a cohort of New York media outlets (including *The New York Times*, *The New York Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*) compelled the data's release. The data set contained "teacher data reports" and value-added scores for all fourth to eighth grade teachers from 2007 to 2010. "Value-added" is an algorithm used to measure a teacher's impact by comparing her students' performance on standardized tests to their performance in previous years.

Originally a manufacturing term used to describe "the amount by which the value of an article is increased at each stage of its production, exclusive of initial costs" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011), value-added became associated with education in the 1980s when agricultural statistician William Sanders adapted an algorithm used in animal breeding for the purpose of evaluating teachers. After studying and refining his model with long-term educational data sets for a decade, Sanders developed the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System (TVAAS) in 1993 to evaluate state educators. Value-Added Measurement (VAM)<sup>1</sup> promises to track the impact of teachers on student learning over a yearly cycle by comparing students' current standardized test scores to their scores in previous school years. School districts assign students a predicted score based their prior testing performance, socioeconomic status, race, special education status, and

---

<sup>1</sup> VAM is shorthand for value added measurement/ measures/ models/ modeling. This form of teacher evaluation is also sometimes referred to as "value added" (VA) or "value-added assessment" (VAA).



other variables (significantly, the school districts do not reveal formulas and particular variables). The difference between the student's predicted and actual scores is attributed to the teacher and comprises the teacher's "value-added" rating.

This method of evaluating teachers has been widely discredited by scholars, research institutes and policy think tanks (including RAND 2004; The Educational Testing Service 2005; the American Educational Research Association 2015; The National Research Council 2010; and The National Academy of Education 2010, to name a few)<sup>2</sup>. From a research perspective, the data is neither valid nor reliable. This means that a teacher's score on any given year is unlikely to be replicated the following year. For example, as Newton et al. demonstrate in their 2011 study of five school districts, "of teachers who scored in the bottom 20% of rankings one year, only 20% to 30% received similar ratings the next year, while 25% to 45% of these teachers moved to the top part of the distribution, scoring well above average (in Darling-Hammond et al. 2012)." Similar patterns have been documented by Corcoran 2010; Kane et al. 2008; Rothstein 2011; Amrein-Beardsley 2008; Amrein-Beardsley & Collins 2012; Papay 2010; Haertel 2013; etc. Furthermore, other studies confirm inconsistencies across different statistical models (Briggs & Domingue, 2011; Newton et al., 2010; Rothstein, 2007) and across different testing instruments (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010; Lockwood et al., 2007), so that by tweaking the algorithm or using a different standardized test, teacher scores vary widely.

Critics attribute the instability of VAM data to three primary factors: 1) the nonrandom assignment of students to teachers both within and across schools; 2) the inability to isolate a single teacher's effect on student performance; and 3) the limits of standardized testing to assess

---

<sup>2</sup> To be precise, these institutions and organizations have argued against the use of value-added measures as a high-stakes assessment tool, to determine compensation, tenure or bonuses.

student learning. The first point suggests that the statistical model of value-added fails because it is premised on the random pairing of students with teachers over time. However, in practice, the assignment of students to a particular teacher is not random. Schools are highly segregated by race, class, and culture, and even within schools, students are tracked overtly and covertly—certain teachers are given more behaviorally “challenging” students or more Spanish-speaking students because of their facility with “hard to reach” youth, their own bilingual skills, or a host of other reasons. Research demonstrates that teachers who teach more academically advanced students, fewer emergent bilinguals, and fewer students with special education needs receive higher value-added scores (Newton et al. 2010; Rothstein 2010)<sup>3</sup>. Thus VAM ratings act as a tax (both metaphorically and literally in the cases of states that use these scores to determine bonuses, compensation, or tenure) on teachers who work in schools and classes with high percentages of low-income youth, English language learners, and students with disabilities. These categories correlate with race and disproportionately represent students of color.

The second major critique of value-added validity challenges the attribution of student growth or decline, as measured by standardized tests, to the impact of a single teacher. Substantial research has shown that student achievement on standardized tests is linked to a wide range of factors including class size, school conditions, other teachers, prior teachers, summer learning (or learning loss), and home supports or challenges. All of these circumstances and dynamics together with the work of a student’s English Language Arts (ELA) teacher influence student learning as expressed in the form of standardized tests. So it is impossible to say whether it was the English teacher’s pedagogy or the support of a tutor, or the rigorous writing assignments in social studies, or the student’s prior ELA teacher or a range of other significant factors that ultimately led to a

---

<sup>3</sup> Teachers who work with the highest achieving students also see low value-added ratings because students who already excel in standardized test-taking have very little room to grow.

particular child's testing gains in a particular year. As the American Statistical Association asserts in their 2014 statement on the use of Value-Added Measures, "VAMs typically measure correlation, not causation: Effects – positive or negative – attributed to a teacher may actually be caused by other factors that are not captured in the model" (p.2). Since students with greater socioeconomic privilege have more and better access to learning supports at home and school, value-added measurements work to magnify these social inequities.

Finally, the use of VAM as a model for teacher assessment is premised on the belief that standardized tests accurately reflect student learning. VAM takes for granted that test scores represent student academic growth despite the well-documented and unintentional statistical errors associated with standardized tests (Ravitch 2011), critiques of the testing instruments (Popham 1999), intentional tampering with state tests, "dumbing-down" material and lowering cut scores in order to meet the high-stakes requirements of No Child Left Behind (Goldstein 2011). Standardized tests have been shown to measure socioeconomic status above all else (Rothstein 2004; Willingham 2012), and to be inappropriate and invalid gauges of learning for emergent bilinguals and special education students (Neill 2005; Sireci 2004). Scores are easily manipulated through narrow curricular focus, test preparation, and the exclusion of particular students, and studies indicate that gains on standardized tests do not often translate to broad measures of student learning (Finn et al. 2014). Most agree that standardized tests capture only a tiny fraction of what matters most in education. What remain unexamined are relationships, critical thinking, innovation, risk-taking and a host of other skills and practices that are difficult if not impossible to assess with the blunt instruments of multiple choice and short-answer questions.

The conceptual basis for VAM in teacher evaluation relies on a series of presuppositions—namely that VAM algorithms can correct for social inequities in the school system (by race, class,

language, resources, dis/ability, etc.<sup>4</sup>); that value-added can isolate the impact of a single teacher; and that standardized tests function as accurate and/ or meaningful representations of student learning. When these premises are called into question—theoretically and empirically—the model fails.

And yet, despite widespread challenges to the credibility of VAM, value-added assessment of teachers has continued to gain popularity and political traction. As a 2015 report published by the National Council on Teacher Quality states:

In 2009, only 15 states in some way (even if only nominally) considered student outcomes in teacher evaluations. Six years later, 43 states now require that student growth and achievement be considered in teacher evaluations, and in 17 states, student outcomes are required to be the preponderant criterion for reviews of teacher performance.<sup>5</sup>

The possibility and popularity of value-added teacher assessment is the result of a cascade of policies and public discourses on schools, testing, teaching, and teacher labor that have grown and taken hold over the last four decades. We can trace the genealogy of value-added measurement—the spread of this tool and conceptual framework—to a series of intersecting policies and ideological positions about the role(s) and purpose(s) of teaching and schooling. Some of the influential forces that have laid the political and conceptual groundwork for VAM include:

— **Neoliberalism.** As a social policy regime and ideology that regards the market as a model for all institutions, practices, and behaviors, neoliberalism takes shape in processes

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<sup>4</sup> The value-added algorithm is designed to account for and thus “correct” social inequities, so that the teacher of a Black child who receives free lunch is evaluated against other teachers of Black children who receive free lunch. Although the capacity of the model to work in this way has been widely challenged as I discuss in the following sections.

<sup>5</sup> The same report (p.32) suggests that sixteen states offer “pay for performance” models based on teacher evaluations, while seven states tie (base) compensation directly to evaluation results.

of extension and dissemination (Brown 2003). With regard to schools and teachers, neoliberal rationality makes way for market-based practices and policies of high-stakes testing, competition, quantitative analysis and choice that guide value-added frameworks. Significantly, VAM takes up what Melamed (2015) calls an ideology of “neoliberal multiculturalism,” a highly racialized model that masquerades as antiracist<sup>6</sup>.

- As a subset of neoliberalism, **human capital theory** postulates that an individual’s knowledge, skills, and competencies constitute quantifiable assets. This supports the valuation of teacher work through the calculation of students’ future worth as measured by academic success. In this view, schools are responsible for developing students’ human capital in the same way that a factory is responsible for producing valuable goods. Similarly, the value of the teacher can be calculated just as it would be for the production process: by relating it to the value of the end product.
- The 2002 Federal law, **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**, required schools to track student achievement (as measured by standardized tests) and to improve scores on a pre-arranged schedule. Schools that did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals were subjected to a series of escalating sanctions including loss of funding and school closure. Driven by the neoliberal logics of personal responsibility, NCLB ushered in a regime of high-stakes testing that targeted and systematically punished groups of students (and schools) with historically low achievement on tests—emergent bilinguals, youth of color, low-income youth and students with special education needs (Leonardo 2007). Finally, NCLB mandated the development of massive data systems to track and compare student

---

<sup>6</sup> Leonardo (2007) provides a clear explanation of this paradox with regard to No Child Left Behind. By tracking students by race, class, language, and dis/ability without any analysis of the history and contemporary expression of structural oppression or sufficient recompense (the financial sanctioning of schools that did not achieve “Adequate Yearly Progress”), this policy reproduces racialized structural inequalities while ostensibly working to narrow the “achievement gap.” Value-added measurement works in a similar way, by calling out and claiming to “account for” social inequities, the complexities of which extend far beyond the capacity of the algorithm.

test scores over time. Both the racialized high-stakes ideology and data infrastructure of NCLB enabled the subsequent transmission of similar modes and stakes in the assessment of teachers.

- The \$4.35 billion competitive grants program **Race to the Top (RTTT)** intensified the dynamics of NCLB particularly with regard to teacher evaluation. In order to become eligible for funding, states were required to institute a series of education reforms including the expansion of charter schools, longitudinal data tracking systems, and performance-based evaluations for teachers and principals. This financial incentive, or what Bryant (2011) calls “de facto legislation,” was largely responsible for the dramatic increase in states that factor student test scores into teacher evaluation (from 15 in 2009 to 43 in 2015 as reported by the National Council on Teacher Quality, 2015).<sup>7</sup>

The popularity and expansion of value-added teacher assessment (despite widespread and wide-ranging critique) grow out of these four interlocking policies and ideologies as well as other dynamics and social dispositions, such as: the majority female composition of the teaching-force (part of a broader gender analysis elaborated in Chapter Two), popular discourse about the outsized impact of teachers on student learning (Rockoff 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain 2005), and technological advances allowing school districts to track and share student and teacher data. These factors shaped the Bloomberg/ Klein practice of calculating value-added scores and sending these “teacher data reports” privately<sup>8</sup> to teachers and schools each year. They shaped

---

<sup>7</sup> The data collection in this dissertation took place in 2013-14, during the first year of one such evaluation policy known as “Advance.” Subsequent chapters provide a detailed description of this policy.

<sup>8</sup> Ravitch (2012) cites a letter sent from Deputy Schools Chancellor Christopher Cerf on October 1, 2008 to then United Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten that reinforced the DOE’s commitments to keeping the data reports private. He wrote,

“1. It is DOE’s firm position and expectation that Teacher Data Reports will not and should not be disclosed or shared outside the school community, defined to include administrators, coaches, mentors, and other professional colleagues authorized by the teacher in question.

2. We will advise Principals to take steps accordingly.

3. In the event a [freedom of information] request for such documents is made, we will work with the UFT to

the interest of New York City news media organizations in obtaining this data in 2010. And, they shaped the publication of the scores two years later when the files were made public.

### visually and grading the teachers

When the DOE released the teachers' value-added ratings they offered up an Excel file—a sprawling spreadsheet of cells, twenty columns across that trailed down for pages upon pages (Figure 2 displays a screenshot of the document). But the stories, searchable databases and dedicated websites published by local and national news organizations in the days and weeks that followed, bore little resemblance to this original document.

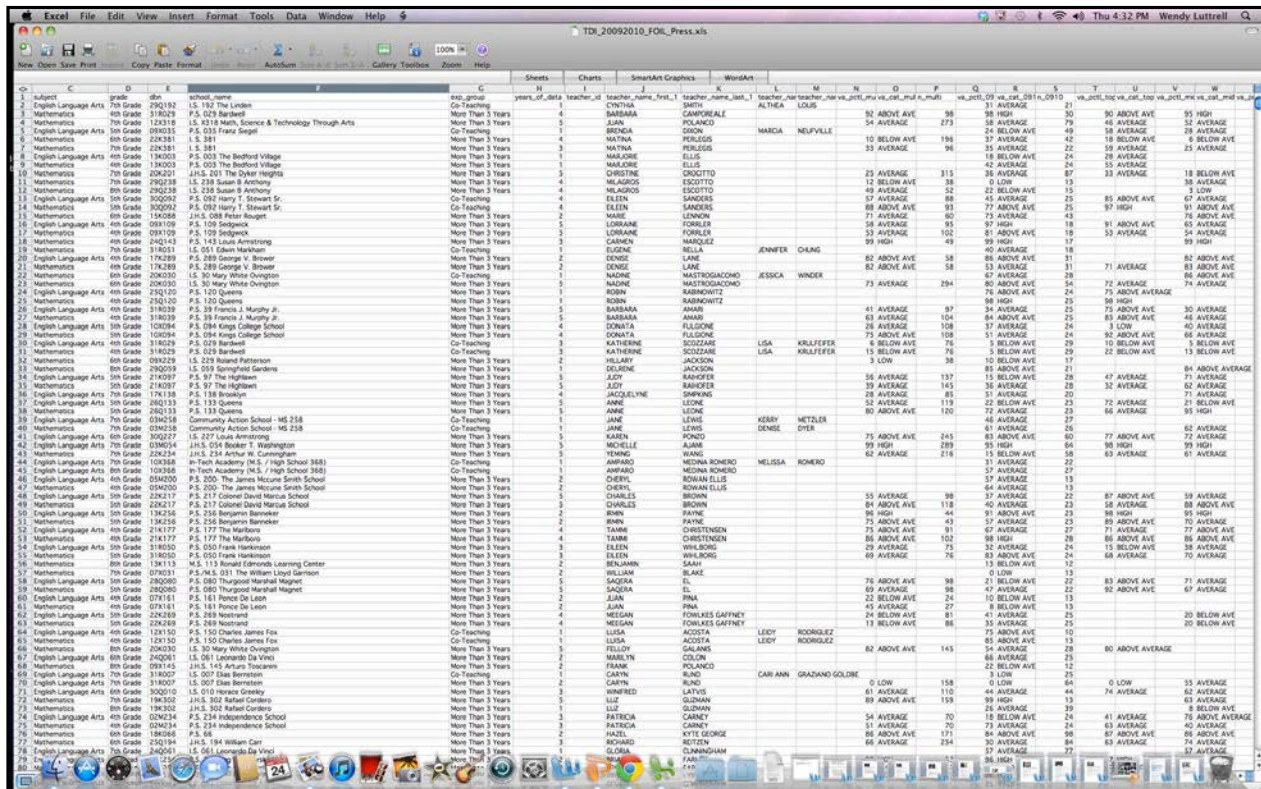


Figure 3. NYC DOE "Teacher Data Reports" (Excel file)

craft the best legal arguments available to the effect that such documents fall within an exemption from disclosure."

The *New York Post* printed an article with the name, photograph, salary, and school of a woman they referred to as “the city’s worst teacher;” later, other outlets including WNYC’s “SchoolBook,” and DNA Info launched searchable databases and “interactive tools” designed to “help parents parse the thousands of names contained in the data” (DNAInfo Staff 2012). And soon after, *The Wall Street Journal* published *Grading the Teachers*, a visually-rich website that joined the database of 18,000 teacher ratings with broader school data as well as linked articles and videos, and a series of data visualizations including interactive maps and charts detailing the city’s “top rated teachers.”

I became interested in the *Wall Street Journal*’s *Grading the Teachers Project*,<sup>9</sup> one of the most visually sophisticated representations of the teacher data reports<sup>10</sup>. I was curious about the visual decisions that the writers and designers made in translating the Excel spreadsheet into interactive compositions full of color and clickable shapes, and how these visual decisions might affect the data’s meaning or interpretation. I considered the *Wall Street Journal* screenshots to be mixed-media (Mitchell 2005) “images” (as opposed to data, data visualizations, reports, etc.), and refer to them as images in order to highlight the significant visual design work that they encode, and to decenter the authority of the representations as facts/ truth (Restler 2013). I studied the site in detail, moving in multiple paths through the various maps, lists, and charts. I conducted an in-depth

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<sup>9</sup> Significantly, the *Grading the Teachers* website, along with all the other searchable databases (from the *New York Post*, *New York Daily News*, SchoolBook, and DNA Info) has been wiped from the internet. I have traced broken links through one of the site designer’s (Jon Keegan) digital CV, blogposts and other sources, but even Google searches no longer turn up results for the website. The Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine, which archives static screenshots of webpages over time, shows the last active snapshot of *Grading the Teachers* on April 23 2014. At the time of the next snapshot, October 13 2014, the link produces an error message. The erasure of this site along with all the other teacher databases is curious, and I’m not sure of the reason behind it—if it has to do with online storage space, with the data becoming old and irrelevant, with the new DeBlasio/ Farina administration (the *Los Angeles Times* continues to publish their teacher ratings with data from 2005-2010). No matter the reason, the disappearance of the data may signal an ideological shift. New York City’s evaluation policies have changed several times since these the publication of these reports in 2012, and it appears that neither the Department of Education nor the news media want to remain affiliated with this moment in evaluation history.

<sup>10</sup> The site won a silver medal from the Society of News Design in 2013 (Ellis 2013).



visual analysis of the images<sup>11</sup> following Rose's (2007) site-modality heuristic, a form of visual analysis that I describe in Chapter Two. Considering questions of production, media, composition, and circulation, I was struck by all the layers of design that went into the site—decisions about color and font that had first seemed commonsensical. I spent hours listing and unwinding each visual choice, moving back and forth between the Excel file to remind myself of what was contained in the original data set.

Zooming in on one school (see Figure 4) offers a window into the aesthetic/ conceptual framing of *Grading the Teachers*. Some of the deliberate design elements include:

- As Figure 4 illustrates, the designers organized the teacher data by school (the Excel file was not organized this way).
- The developers grouped teacher ratings from the same school together along with other school data including the school grade (a controversial evaluation practice instituted under New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor, Joel Klein), so that when we look at the landing page for this Bronx middle school, our eye is drawn to the letter “B” (the largest font on the page)—an immediate snapshot of the school’s “quality”—although devoid of context or explanation for how the grade is calculated.
- Alongside the school grade, the writers/ designers display a series of pastel pie charts with demographic data about students’ race, class (via school lunch statistics), and a sliced-up circle of pinks and blues that corresponds to the whole school’s faculty ratings. Thus, in the case of this school, we can tell at a glance that about half of the teachers were deemed “average” (blue), while slightly less were rated “below average” (pale pink),

and the smallest group received “low” (reddish-pink) ratings. In this case, no teachers were rated “above average” or “high.”

— Below the school data, a three-columned chart lists the full names of each Math and English teacher on the school faculty; a short description of the duration of teachers’ classroom experience (2 years, more than 3 years, etc.); and a third column for “performance,” where teachers’ value-added rating is written in bold uppercase font, and assigned a color with varying levels of transparency.<sup>12</sup> So while “average” comes through in a hazy blue, the “low” ratings call attention with bold pops of solid pink-red.

In this way, what at first appears to be a straightforward document of teacher proficiency is actually a highly stylized visual representation. All of the visual and conceptual elements of the page are considered, and questions of which data points to include, and how to display them (color, font size and style, composition, visualizations) shape the way they are read. They construct a narrative about particular schools and teachers as successful, ok, failing, etc. that comes through ahead of a nuanced reading. In fact, the design elements lend new layers of abstraction to already highly abridged data. Here is a brief window into one strand in the sites’ spiral of abstraction: *Value-added data begins as student test scores, already an abstract symbol of student learning which comes to be represented by numerical symbol → The teacher rating joins this original score in algorithmic calculation to parse the teacher’s impact—another layer of abstraction → which is then assigned a value from “low” to “high.” → Finally, in the visual design of Grading the Teachers, this value is color coded with reds and blues, allowing for rapid assimilation of the material.*

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<sup>12</sup> Another word for these varying levels of color is “value,” which in this context refers to the relative lightness or darkness of a color.

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## Grading the Teachers

New York City ranked about 18,000 fourth- through eighth-grade teachers based on their students' math and English standardized test scores. The model seeks to isolate individual impact on students, but the reports include disputed data and are only one way to evaluate teachers.

**How are teachers being measured?**

NYC Teacher Rankings Explained  
Lisa Fleisher, WSJ's New York schools reporter, answers frequently asked questions about the city's teacher-evaluation system.

Stories from the series  
New York Releases  
Teacher Rankings  
Rankings Beyond NYC  
Variations Spark Skepticism  
Bracing for New Dynamics  
Numbers Guy on the Data  
Origins of NYC's Evaluation Model  
Chat With Michelle Rhee

• Top-Rated English Teachers • Top-Rated Math Teachers  
• Random Teacher • Random School

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### SCHOOLWIDE

This information does not incorporate teacher rankings. The school profile, including the most recent progress-report grade, is based on separate city data.

Overall Grade **B** 2010-2011

Overall Score **48.1** out of 100

Percent of Students with Free or Discounted Lunch 2009-2010

School Demographics 2009-2010

Overall Grades K-8

Grade	Score Range	% of schools
A	57.1 or higher	25% of schools
B	41.3 - 57.0	35% of schools
C	25.3 - 41.2	30% of schools
D	14.5 - 25.2	7% of schools
F	14.4 or lower	3% of schools

### TEACHERS

#### Teacher Ratings at This School

An index of teachers at this school showing their performance rating for the 2009-10 academic year. Click an entry to see a teacher's complete report.

School-wide Breaks on Teacher Data Reports 2009-2010\*

\*Only math and English teachers are rated; some teachers have multiple ratings

<< first < prev 1 next > last >>

Teacher	Teaching Experience	Performance Category
	More Than 3 Years	Eng., 8th Grade BELOW AVG.
	2 Years	Eng., 5th Grade BELOW AVG.
	More Than 3 Years	Math, 8th Grade AVERAGE
	More Than 3 Years	Eng., 8th Grade AVERAGE
	Co-Teaching	Math, 8th Grade LOW
	3 Years	Math, 5th Grade LOW
	More Than 3 Years	Math, 8th Grade AVERAGE
	3 Years	Eng., 1st Grade BELOW AVG.
	More Than 3 Years	Eng., 8th Grade AVERAGE
	Co-Teaching	Math, 8th Grade AVERAGE
	More Than 3 Years	Math, 7th Grade BELOW AVG.
	More Than 3 Years	Math, 8th Grade AVERAGE
	More Than 3 Years	Math, 7th Grade BELOW AVG.
	More Than 3 Years	Math, 8th Grade BELOW AVG.
	2 Years	Math, 8th Grade AVERAGE
	More Than 3 Years	Eng., 8th Grade BELOW AVG.

Figure 4. Grading the Teachers Screenshot (school and teacher names blacked out for privacy)

These design choices, like the policies and practices they represent, are meant to convey complex information quickly. And they do. They help make sense of the dense sea of Excel data. We can look at the Bronx middle school webpage and in a minute or two, tell ourselves stories about the school—*it's OK, not great; mostly students of color, all poor; teachers are somewhat below average, etc.* In this way, as the images work to clarify the data, they also simplify the narrative(s) about how the algorithm works, what is being measured, about teacher work and school life. The true complexity of school narratives and school work however, are not quickly or easily digestible—they demand time and history(ies) and context(s).

I understood these *Grading the Teachers* screenshots as enacting a form of Mirzoeff's (2011) concept of "visuality," a theory which he defines as "the means by which authority is sutured to power." Following this construction, I saw the images as working not only to reinforce dominant social policies and discourses, but also to legitimate them and construct them as common sense. The visual abbreviations of *Grading the Teachers* work to solidify the shaky ground of the data and to buttress the neoliberal ethos of value-added policies. They naturalize the portrayal of schools in terms of letter grades, pie charts, and stacks of demographic data, of grading teachers with a red pen. Calling on grammars of Newtonian science, practices of categorizing, and the objectivity/ political power of numerical data (Smith et al. 2004), these images bolster the visual authority of education policies and discourses about schools as markets, teachers as producers of human capital, competition, individual responsibility, and racialized failure.

I was interested in the way *Grading the Teachers* (as an exemplar) played at dynamics of visibility and invisibility. For all the rhetoric of access and intelligibility, what do these representations conceal and erase? Among the compositions of school and teacher data, what remains invisible or hard to see about the textures of classrooms, the resources in the room, or the view out the

window? The webs of relationships between teachers and students? Curriculum and pedagogy, daily lessons and the many ways learning may be detected or reflected? About the loops between home and school and family and neighborhood life? How does the standardized format—the replication of fonts and colors and compositions across each school site—compress and wash over the particularities of students and teachers and spaces, all the social factors, sensory data, and energies that make schools so challenging and complex and rich?

By framing the subjects of teaching, schooling and studenting, and cropping out alternative perspectives, these visualizations make authoritative claims about the value of teacher work. As I reflected on what aspects of value have been excluded from these visualizations, I considered the twist of “value”-related definitions that comprise this many-sided word and concept. Value as:

- A number
- As an individual or collective ethic
- As matter/ mattering
- Worth (as price or cost)/ worth (as virtue)
- As the intensity of a shade of a color
- Values as value

These multiple meanings and the overlapping space in, around, and between value as numerical, visual, monetary, and moral, shape the focus of my study on the visual culture of teaching and teacher evaluation.

### *countervisuality and re-visualizing teacher evaluation*

The images and ideologies of these VAM graphics flatten the complex significations of value, reducing them to an essential meaning that any way you put it—in fancy words or sophisticated

equations—boils down to an economic analysis. If *Grading the Teachers* represents a narrow view of teacher value, I wondered about the other values (e.g. in moral terms) and value (as in non-monetary terms like emotion/ desire) that shape teacher work. How might teachers (especially critical/ radical/ progressive teachers) make sense of these images? How might they represent their own practices in relation to, and outside of, this image regime? What values would they bring forward, and what would/ could those images look like?

This line of critique and wondering shape the subject of my dissertation study, organized around a central question with two sub-questions:

- How does a group of “radical”<sup>13</sup> teachers understand the value of their work as teachers?
  - How do these teachers use images to take up, resist and bend neoliberal discourses about the value and purpose of teaching?
  - How do these teachers express the value of their work in images and through image-making?

### *other logics*

In her history of Britain’s 19<sup>th</sup> century credit economy, Mary Poovey (2001) traces the origins of marketization as a social ethos. Exploring the contemporary expression of neoliberal ideology, she explains:

The logic that informs commodification has become totalizing...partly because the institutions and modes of circulation that embody or objectify the logic have attained a level of complexity, geographic extension, and pervasiveness that makes resistance to this

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<sup>13</sup> I use the descriptor “radical” because of the teachers’ affiliations with the New York Collective of Radical Educators, the volunteer-based teacher activist organization that I partnered with to recruit teacher participants. The word is meant to broadly connote the teachers’ critical/ left-wing/ progressive stance towards education policy and practice and activist engagement.

logic virtually unimaginable. Partly the logic that informs commodification has colonized the terms in which we experience, imagine, and register because this logic is tautological: once one accepts any of its premises, all its presuppositions and conclusions come pouring in, like the flood that follows the proverbial first drop (p.399).

Through what it makes visible and invisible about schools and teaching work, *Grading the Teachers* bears out Poovey's analysis, mobilizing visual narratives in the circular, self-referential logics of school evaluation and accountability. The red-pink stripe labeled "low" is the drop that signals the flood—a cycle of abstractions that express student learning over the course of a year through their achievement on one test on one day → that represent the student's right and wrong answers with a number → that link that score with scores from other years and other students to calculate (through secret equations) the value of teacher work as a number → that compare that number to other numbers (citywide peer comparison<sup>14</sup>) → that assign a rating to the score from low to high → that pair that rating with a color. Put another way, the red-pink strip encodes all the different forms the data took—as a pattern of shaded "bubbles," as numbers, as algorithms, papers, and digital files—and the spaces the data traveled to and from—elementary schools, sub-contracted testing centers, government offices, family and teacher homes, and newspaper bureaus.

The complexity and abstraction of these images, the geographical spread and many layers of institutional collaboration that they represent, the aesthetic and numerical "symbols of precision, accuracy, and objectivity" (Smith et al. 2004, p.155) that they take up through graphs, pie charts, and percentages form a current of dense and near-immersive logic that is hard to interrupt. But

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<sup>14</sup> As the DOE (2008) explains, "The "peer comparison" sections of the report are different from the "citywide comparison" sections in two ways. First, the predicted gain in all peer comparison calculations takes into account the teacher's experience overall and in that grade and subject. Second, teachers are divided into 5 groups based on their average predicted gain, meaning they have similar student, classroom, and school characteristics. For peer comparisons, a teacher's result is compared to the results only from classrooms in their group. There are several hundred teachers in each peer comparison group."

we must interrupt it or re-imagine it. As Poovey (2001) contends, in response to the circular ethos of marketization, “it is necessary for us to develop and circulate concepts that belong to an equally tautological logic.” She argues for creativity as a guiding principle, asserting that, “even if there are no things that money can’t buy we have to insist that there ought to be—even if only to hold open a space for experiences and sensations whose value we cannot presently conceptualize” (p.399).

#### o v e r v i e w

My project engages radical teachers through image analysis and image making to hold this space open. In 2013-14, the first year of “Advance,” a New York-statewide teacher assessment policy, I worked with a group of ten New York City public school teachers to chart their reflections on practice both inside and outside the contours of Advance. Together, we analyzed and critiqued popular media such as the *Grading the Teachers* images, remixed images on a digital platform, and created new images—photographs, drawings, and videos that work in relation and opposition to dominant visualities of value-added. The visual and mixed-media work that comes out of this project—the teachers’ and my own arts-based analysis—form a visual archive of resistance, or what Mirzoeff calls “countervisualities.” Through the stories and practices, shapes and mark-making—the teacher participants refuse to accept *Grading the Teachers*’ claims to truth, neutrality, and authority. In Mirzoeff’s construction, these images assert the teachers’ own “right[s] to look” and “right[s] to be seen” (2011, p.1)—a visual language for raising up their perspectives and experiences outside of the tautology of neoliberal logics.

My dissertation opens up a conversation about teacher labor in dialogue with contemporary policies and controlling images (Collins 1990), as gendered practice rooted in the early feminization of teaching, and as largely invisible carework that is socially situated in the cultural/



racial/ gendered/ sexual identities of teachers, students and school communities. My analysis of educational carework—particularly in the context of urban school sites with 90- 99% students of color, and 79-100% low-income students<sup>15</sup>—presents a picture of school care outside of white, middle-class norms, and what Thompson (1998) calls “colorblind theories” of care. Whereas these highly gendered and classed, colorblind constructions locate care in private, individual expressions of attention, the teachers I worked with articulated their own caring practices across diverse forms including culturally relevant pedagogy, activism, emotional and physical labor, and public, community work. My research shines a light on this central facet of teaching, expanding our imagination of school care, and calling out the mismatch between white, middle-class expectations and the actual demands placed on urban teachers. Bringing forward the unequal distribution of teachers’ caring burdens and responsibilities across race/ class/ gender/ culture/ and language in urban schools, my study highlights teachers’ carework as a significant (and under-researched) site for the social reproduction of school inequality. And my use of digital and visual methodologies records and makes visible the invisible work of teaching, thereby breaking through currently accepted quantitative images to see students, teachers and schools in their full humanity.

The format of my dissertation differs from the standard structure in several ways. First, my theoretical frameworks—namely, an intersectional feminist reading of labor, invisible work, and carework, and visibility-countervisibility are woven throughout the document. Second, I have included reflective segments focused on my researcher positionality and methodology in many of

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<sup>15</sup> In this piece, as in the rest of my dissertation, I use labels such as “low wealth,” “historically marginalized,” and “poor and working class” to describe young people who have limited financial resources. And yet, in conducting research that seeks to disrupt the stigma these youth face, I realize that these terms are themselves stigmatizing. A primary objective of my work is to write against labels and offer new, more complex angles of vision onto the images and worlds of these young people. We need new, better words for describing and contextualizing interlocking systems of prejudice, racism, and poverty.

the chapters (and as an interlude between Chapters Two and Three; a second interlude or contextual “side story” is sandwiched between Chapters Five and Six). And third, in addition to the seven substantive chapters of my dissertation, I developed a companion website or digital assemblage that draws together my arts-based work with theoretical textual analysis.

In Chapter Two I offer a detailed description of the methodology of the project, including a reflexive discussion of my own social location, the central role of research relationships and my multimodal approach to data collection and analysis. In this chapter I set the stage for the arts-based components of my dissertation—the [digital assemblage](#) that presents the teachers’ images together with my own artwork and scholarly analysis on the digital publishing platform, Scalar. This website displays two bodies of artwork (made by me in relationship to the teachers’ images and narratives) together with chapter-length scholarly texts. The digital assemblage is designed to function in and between analysis, experimentation, multimodal “sketch,” sensory scholarship, and as a countervisuality of teacher work and research practice. I invite readers to read, view, look, and listen to it alongside or after completing the print manuscript at <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/re-visualizing-care>.

A short interlude following Chapter Two entitled, *seeing (and not seeing) care in context*, extends my discussion of reflexive methodologies. In this interlude, I consider my shifting analysis of the teachers’ images and narratives over time. I describe the personal, positional and ethical blinders that blocked me from “seeing” large chunks of my data and how I eventually reconciled them with the aids of Ginwright’s (2016) “healing justice” framework and Tuck’s (2009) “desire-based research.”

Chapter Three outlines a cultural and political-economic analysis of teaching as women's work, tracing the history of the 19th century feminization of teaching up through the present. I argue that the project of American public education (and its racist and xenophobic origins) is intertwined with the construction of the white female teacher. Bringing my analysis up to the present, I consider the contemporary absence of a gendered critique of education policy and teacher work in light of dominant neoliberal and racial capitalist frameworks in critical academic scholarship and teacher activist discourse.

Chapter Four sketches an intersectional feminist analysis of labor, looking closely at the theoretical frames and scholarly origins of the concepts of "invisible work," and "carework." Linking the literature with the teachers' reflections on their own labor, I challenge dominant white feminized models of care, to position the teachers' carework as both public and private, rooted in love and social justice. Taking up the visual dynamics of invisible work and care, I consider the works of three contemporary artists who address these themes through painting, performance, and installation.

In Chapter Five, I focus in on five teacher-made images of invisible work that arose through various projects, conversations and contexts in my research with the teacher-activists. In the first part of the chapter I offer a careful visual analysis of these images in dialogue with the teachers' narratives as a means to consider the particular kinds of invisible work and the dynamics that shape their in/visibility, particularly the race, class, cultural contexts of students and school communities. The second part of the chapter takes up the question, *invisible to whom?* Here I track teachers' invisible labor in relation to education policy, social discourse, administrators, family/friends, and to themselves.

In a second interlude between Chapters Five and Six, I engage a “side story” shared by one of the teacher participants during our interview about her school’s security apparatus. I link her narrative to the social and political-economic context of my study (and of New York City public schools) including policies and discourses around immigration enforcement, broken windows policing, and state-sanctioned violence against people of color.

Chapter Six offers a categorical analysis of a series of drawings called teacher practice maps, as well as a detailed visual analysis of four teacher images. Through close “reading” of the teachers’ drawings and narrative data, I argue that teacher work is profoundly shaped by context, both teachers’ own intersectional social positions as well as those of their students and school communities. The participants’ words and images reject dominant colorblind and neoliberal accountability frames. Instead they offer nuanced and specific depictions of teacher practice rooted in identity, social location, and relationships—countervisualities (Mirzoeff 2011) of care.

Finally, in Chapter Seven I return to a discussion of value framed by Poovey’s (2001) analysis of “market logics.” I argue that by centering carework, the teachers’ images and narratives offer a lens for viewing and valuing teacher work outside of the tautologies of neoliberal school accountability. As opposed to implications, I end by offering a series of provocations—questions and “radical possibilities” (Anyon 2005) that grow from the teachers’ contributions.

## CHAPTER 2

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *introduction*

My research takes up the topic of teacher evaluation in a moment of moral panic about “bad teachers,” public controversy over Value-Added Measures (VAM) of teacher work, and the widespread implementation of new assessment policies under Race to the Top (RTTT). In 2014, I worked with a group of radical New York City educators in the first year of a policy known as “Advance” to trace the shape(s) of their practice both in and outside the contours of the new evaluation system. Connecting the language, image culture, and ideology of “value added” to neoliberal market logics, I wanted to understand how teachers interpreted and critiqued the policy (and the surrounding visual/ textual discourse). I also sought to identify other kinds of stories, images, and ways of seeing their work. I was interested in understanding the logics and values that shaped the labor of these teachers: their daily tasks and philosophical foundations. By asking “How does a group of “radical”<sup>16</sup> teachers understand the value of their work as teachers?” I hoped to bring forward and describe other value systems, other “equally tautological logics” (Poovey 2001, p.155), external to value-added rationality. And I took up image-making and analysis in part for the distinct (from text-based traditional research methods) set of epistemological and pedagogical values and frames that they encode.

I come to these questions of value (in and outside of dominant capitalist frames), teaching, learning, schooling, images, and art making with my own experiences, dispositions, skills, and

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<sup>16</sup> I use the descriptor “radical” because of the teachers’ affiliations with the New York Collective of Radical Educators, the volunteer-based teacher activist organization that I partnered with to recruit teacher participants. The word is meant to broadly connote the teachers’ critical/ left-wing/ progressive stance towards education policy and practice and activist engagement.

vulnerabilities—repeating patterns and mutations like an ever-shifting positional code imprinted on my cells and soul. These are some of the experiences and perspectives that orient me to this work:

- When I first saw Egon Schiele’s drawings at the age of sixteen, something about the quality of his line and the groundless figures seemed to make visible a whole host of feelings—love, sexuality, shakiness—in a particular constellation beyond words. At twenty-four, as I sat on the concrete floor of my studio pressing ink-stained globs of cotton rag pulp between my fingers, it was as though the shape of the paper took on the feeling communicated through the force and direction of my touch.
- During my senior year of high school, I made a home in the sixth floor art studio, often spending lunch times and after-schools kneeling in front of a small mirror, working through another self-portrait in gouache or graphite or oils. I worked abstractly that year with collage and found objects, but I kept coming back over and over to my own face. I was in the midst of my first bout of depression and anxiety and my first time falling in love. I think in those repeated self-portraits I was looking for answers on the surface of my skin—*what is happening to me? What’s wrong with me? What does he see when he looks at me and how could he possibly...?*
- I have long believed that my brain doesn’t (easily) work in the way that school structures believe it should. For as long as I can remember I have “doodled” during class to help listen and stay present. I fought with my sixth grade English teacher and ninth grade Latin teacher (who referred to me as “little Miss Vicky” in a pejorative tone). College professors pulled me aside to request that I stop drawing during their classes. In this way, schooling and artmaking (in and against classroom strictures) have always been entwined for me. Langer wrote that the arts “objectify the life of a feeling” (1953, p.374). I wonder if drawing, in addition to stimulating my thinking, calming me, and assuaging boredom, also

serves as a kind of emotional imprint. A way of injecting feeling into academic spaces that often push it aside.

- In college I spent a year studying the impact of globalization on culture, economics and the environment in five countries. This year changed so much about how I thought about school—it was the first time that I recognized “learning” as something that could be independent of schoolwork (readings, papers, tests). Seeing and experiencing so many distinct expressions of life and culture—food and values, local governing structures, economic systems, daily rhythms—decentered and denaturalized my own Western framework. It offered an opening, a chink in the high wall of neoliberal power structures and ideologies (even if I did not yet know that word), a window into all the ways that life can look different. Fifteen years later, I still sometimes whisper to myself, “it doesn’t have to be this way,” a kind of mantra about imagination and possibility and resistance.
- In 2009 and 2010 I conducted a study of an alternative model of indigenous schools called the *Secundarias Comunitarias* (Community Middle Schools). Situated across a series of rural Oaxacan communities, these bilingual, intercultural schools operate around a set of ideas and practices antithetical to Western (and Mexican Mestizo) schooling structures. Organized around the indigenous principle of *comunalidad*—a collective identity and worldview that links people to community, spirituality, and the natural world (Diaz 1992; Luna 1994; Maldonado 2002; and Rendón 2003)—these institutions take up the (culturally) violent and occupying force of indigenous schooling, and remake it—“*para contrarrestar los efectos de la dominación*” —to counter the effect of domination (Maldonado 2010).
- I realized recently that as a 36 ½ year old woman, the goals of hard work and remuneration have never been aligned in my life. The things I have worked hardest for have often been poorly compensated or uncompensated—making art, writing a

dissertation, working in nonprofit education, parenting, partnering. I don't feel especially motivated by money (an enormous privilege that comes largely from never having had to worry about having enough growing up, and also knowing firmly that I can count on my family for financial support if needed). I keep imagining that one day, I will wake up and become an adult and start making strategic life decisions in order to accumulate greater wealth (for the sake of my kids), but it hasn't happened yet.

These experiences shape my skepticism about the alignment and overlap of ethical values with financial value; about the tangle of art and learning, school and emotion; about knowing with and through image-making; about school as a site of genocide (as in the case of indigenous Mexico) and of possibility. I am putting these stories forward in an effort to clarify my framework and put my own researcher reflexivity into practice. For as Luttrell (2010, p.4) suggests, "reflexivity is about much more than researcher self-conscious awareness. It is about making the research process and decision making visible at multiple levels: personal, methodological, theoretical, epistemological, ethical, and political."

#### *the study: centering research relationships*

In 2013-14, the New York City Department of Education launched Advance, a new teacher evaluation policy put forward in order to comply with Race to the Top grant funding that required states to evaluate teachers based on "measures of student learning." Advance joined value-added ratings with classroom observations modeled on Charlotte Danielson's "Framework for Teaching," a 62-page rubric with four domains and twenty-two "components" or sub-domains for evaluating classroom practice. This new evaluation policy, often referred to by educators as "Danielson," appeared to emphasize the classroom observations which counted for 60% of teachers' scores over the 40% attributed to test-based outcomes. However, as analysts cautioned



at the time, because of the way the scoring was structured, “teachers who are measured ineffective on the test-based component of the evaluation **must** be labeled ineffective overall, *no matter what they receive from their principal based on the observation of their teaching*” (Movement of Rank and File Educators 2013, emphasis in original). Significantly, teachers who received “ineffective” ratings two years in a row would be subject to an expedited disciplinary hearing where they would “face a presumption of incompetence which they [would] have the burden to disprove” (UFT 2015).

The new system was announced in June 2013, and a bumpy rollout left many teachers and principals confused about the design of the policy and counterintuitive scoring rubric.<sup>17</sup> In January 2014, midway through the first year, I joined with a group of ten critical high school teachers whom I connected with through the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE), a volunteer-run teacher activist organization. I was interested in how radical educators were making sense of this new policy and their work more broadly.

In all parts—research design, data collection and analysis, art-making and audiencing, my theoretical framework, and approach to validity—my study is rooted in reflexive relationships and collaboration. I follow Luttrell’s reflexive origami-North Star (2010, p.161) that positions “research relationships” at the center of social justice study. She explains, “...the model makes visible the central role *research relationships* play. Negotiating and representing research relationships—what and how we learn with and about others and ourselves—is at the heart of the research journey” (Luttrell, p 160). My approach brings forward my own reflexive negotiation

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<sup>17</sup> The policy has seen multiple edits and amendments over the past 3 years. For example: In 2014-15, the UFT announced that, “While the entire Danielson Framework may be used for formative purposes, teachers will only receive ratings on the following eight prioritized components” (2014). Then in 2016-17, the policy changed from two measure of student learning (formerly state and local tests) to one (decided by school committees), and a new grading system that uses a matrix rather than a numerical score.

with participants and collaborators, including my co-facilitator Lee and nine other teacher participants, with NYCoRE as a partner organization; and with the Collaborative Seeing Studio and my arts-research group, two interpretive communities that have served as critical and supportive audiences for my work. In setting context for the study, I describe each of these relationships below.

## NYCoRE

I joined the New York Collective of Radical Educators in 2006 when I was working in nonprofit education<sup>18</sup>. That summer, I moved home to New York City to launch an arts and social justice program in the five boroughs. NYCoRE's conference and active list-serve provided a tool for connecting with progressive educators and organizations, and also a sense of community as I got my bearings. Founded in 2002, NYCoRE also publishes curriculum, organizes affinity groups (like "Educators of Color" and NYQueer), and, since 2005, provides an annual slate of teacher professional development offerings called Inquiry to Action Groups (ItAGs). ItAGs are "similar to a study group, but the goal is that after the group inquires into a particular topic, they will together create action around their area of study, making it a true community of praxis. The topics and themes chosen are always consistent with NYCoRE's points of unity, which have to do with issues of education and social justice" (NYCoRE, n.d.). ItAGs, like the broader volunteer-run structure of NYCoRE, are labors of love—participants and facilitators take part voluntarily, there is no credit, accreditation or assessment, and no pay (participants are responsible only for a

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<sup>18</sup> NYCoRE offers a flexible and inclusive model of membership. The website (NYCoRE n.d.) states, "I Can Consider Myself a NYCoRE Member if: A) I find myself in agreement with NYCoRE's Points of Unity AND I've been consistently involved in one or more of the following ways: 1. Attend member meetings; 2. Participate in a working group and/or; 3. Participate in an identity group such as AWE-G or EOC; 4. Facilitate or participate in the ItAGs.

minimal fee<sup>19</sup>). The workshops take place over a minimum of seven weekly sessions, focus on topics ranging from Theater of the Oppressed to Islamophobia, and culminate with a group project or action. Past actions have included curricula, teach out presentations, and activist-theater performances. Kohli et al. locate ItAGs as a form of Critical Professional Development (CPD), a theory drawn from Freire’s notion of praxis. CPD:

[F]ollows the tenets of dialogical action: it is designed to provoke cooperative dialogue, build unity, provide shared leadership, and meet the critical needs of teachers. CPD engages teachers in political analysis of their role as educators in the reproduction or resistance of inequality. (2015, p.11)

In contrast to Antidialogical Professional Development (APD)—a banking style of professional development that “frames teachers as empty vessels” (p.10)—CPD engages teachers as “politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society” (p.9). ItAGs enact this spirit of cooperative dialogue by explicitly inviting participants to co-construct the experience. As Picower explains:

The ItAG facilitators carve out an area and framework for the given topic, but leave enough flexibility for the participants to say what it is that they want to focus on, and what they want to get out of the ItAG. Often times the participants facilitate a session, suggest readings or bring in guest speakers who they know who can add to the topic. (2015, p.9)

This dynamic, together with the focus on creating a group “action” works to disrupt the traditional balance of power in classroom spaces and teacher professional development.

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<sup>19</sup> NYCoRE charges a \$30.00 registration fee for participants that helps to cover costs incurred by the program including food and materials. Facilitators are volunteers and the fees directly support NYCoRE’s ongoing work.

## *preparation*

In order to comply with ItAG requirements that all facilitators must first participate in an ItAG, and to deepen my understanding of NYCoRE's work and culture, I spent the year leading up to the start of my data collection in January 2014 doing ongoing field research with the organization. First, I participated in an ItAG on the topic of mayoral control in public education from January to March 2013. Through this experience I got to know several NYCoRE members and got a feel for the ItAG format. I learned what is possible in the space of approximately seven two-hour meetings, and how dynamics of power and responsibility play out among facilitators and participants. For example, in this ItAG, the facilitators assumed certain administrative responsibilities—sending out emails, setting weekly agendas—and crafted the concept and course structure, which revolved around dialogues with local activists in opposition to mayoral control. However, participants took an active role in shaping the experience—we co-created a timeline and list of key questions for the course and shared the responsibility for inviting speakers, choosing readings, and devising our collective action: a group teach-out delivered to a packed house at the spring NYCoRE conference. Throughout my participation, I recorded regular memos on my experience in the ItAG, paying particular attention to group dynamics and the kinds of activities that were most and least successful.<sup>20</sup> And as a result of my engagement, I determined that Inquiry to Action Groups would offer a rich critical, democratic, and creative learning space for my own study.

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<sup>20</sup> As an example, in this ItAG, we only began seriously talking about our culminating action in the second-to-last meeting, without enough time to plan a creative action. Thus we selected what is something of a default—presenting our work at the NYCoRE conference. The presentation was successful, but it felt like a missed opportunity to talk and think about how to make change on this topic. I decided that going forward with the new ItAG I wanted to leave ample time, two to three sessions, for talking about and planning an action and encouraging participants to think outside of the conference presentation framework.

Later, in the fall of 2013, I attended monthly NYCoRE meetings from September to November, and wrote up my observations and reflections in fieldnotes. Through these meetings, I got a feel for the elements of a NYCoRE gathering:

- Food: food was always provided. Not skimpy hummus and pretzels kind of food, but a hot Chinese, Dominican, or Indian meal. This ritual of “breaking bread” together seemed to emphasize community building and also a spirit of generosity.
- Icebreakers: all meetings began with some form of icebreaker. “Group yourselves by the month of your birthday without speaking!” “Work as a group to make a machine with your bodies!” These were silly, playful activities that despite any internal eye rolls mostly do just what they were supposed to do: loosen people up, get folks talking, boost the energy in the room.
- Sharing: in small and big groups, teachers were given ample opportunities to share their experiences and perspectives. Lots of storytelling, lots of “Well at my school, we’re doing...”
- Theory and practice: activities often invited connections between teachers’ individual daily experiences with broader, theoretical frames. An example of this is the “problem tree” exercise where we brainstormed both the everyday manifestations of issues like “high stakes testing”—the leaves—and the deeper causes of those problems like racialized tracking—the roots.

These ingredients reminded me of my former work organizing and leading events for youth and educators, the blend of community building, group reflection, and activism. Being in this kind of educational, intellectual, social, and voluntary space is qualitatively different than the college classrooms where I have spent more than six years as an adjunct instructor. And it was a good reminder of the efficacy of these ingredients for building relationships, and how to gauge the right balance of academic language, personal sharing, thinking, and fun as I began to think

through the ItAG activities. Finally, over this time period, I exchanged a number of phone calls, emails, and in-person meetings with Natalia Ortiz and Edwin Mayorga, friends, NYCoRE “Core” Members, and colleagues at the Graduate Center. I recorded and kept memos on their feedback, language, and advice such as Edwin’s caution that I remember to frame the ItAG “with teachers at the center,” and to make sure “it’s not too academic-y.”

*l e e*

NYCoRE is a decentralized organization, run by volunteer members on a shoestring budget. But they have rules and structures that guide the work and reflect the group’s values. For example, the “Core,” a central governing council for the group, must always be comprised of a majority of women and people of color. Similarly, ItAGs must be facilitated by two or more members, both must have participated in a past ItAG, and at least one must be a fulltime classroom teacher and a person of color.

The task of finding a partner felt initially like a logistical roadblock—a challenge to connect with someone who shared my particular combination of interests in teacher evaluation, visual analysis, and art-making as resistance (I worried that my questions were strange and that especially the art piece might seem out of place or too theoretical in the activist context of NYCoRE). But as I started to meet with potential co-facilitators my fears were assuaged. It was exciting to join with other artist-educator-activists and think through the new teacher evaluation policy and the possibilities for activities, art projects and collective actions.

Natalia Ortiz, the co-coordinator for the ItAGs, served as “yenta”<sup>21</sup> in connecting me with Lee. Lee and Natalia had taught together for several years at a Brooklyn transfer school, and had maintained a close connection as educators, mothers, activists, and friends. I knew Lee a bit as well as she had co-facilitated the ItAG on mayoral control (entitled “What’s mayoral control got to do with it?”) that I had participated in the year prior. These workshops had come at a demanding time for me personally and professionally—I was preparing to defend my second exam and dissertation proposal and also seven months pregnant with my first child. I attended regularly and enjoyed the experience, but I was a bit distracted and also had to leave twenty-minutes early each week for a child birth class uptown.

A few weeks into the ItAG on mayoral control, Lee realized that I was “Lincoln’s sister”—she knew my brother through his political work in North Brooklyn (I think he had charmed her mother too), so that felt like a nice connection. She was also one of two other mothers in the group—her (then) fifteen-year old son often attended the ItAG—and she was attentive to my pregnancy, asking about how I was feeling and commiserating with third trimester discomforts. My impression of Lee as a facilitator was of a woman who is organized and confident. Petite with short dark hair, striking, delicate features and a fluid sprinkling of Spanish phrases in her speech, she always seemed at ease in front of the room. I could tell from her stories and from the guest speakers she brought to our group that she was a well-connected activist and an experienced educator.

The first time we met at a *taqueria* in Williamsburg to explore the possibility of working together, we talked through our concerns and shared ideas for ItAG activities. We also began the work of locating ourselves for each other, telling stories of our trajectories as artists, activists, and

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<sup>21</sup> “Yenta” is a “Yinglish” (or Yiddish-English) word for a female matchmaker.

educators. Lee talked about her struggles at a new school (she was coming to the end of her first semester at Lincoln Tech) and how after twelve years in the field, this was her first experience of coming home to cry regularly. She talked about a lack of respect from school administration and having to rotate between five separate classrooms. We spoke about personal things too, the challenges of early motherhood, and her experience raising her son as a toddler with his father's family on a farm in Puerto Rico. And by the end of the hour and a half-meeting, I felt a giant swell of gratitude for the opportunity to collaborate with Lee and for NYCoRE's facilitation requirements.

I could appreciate, even in that first meeting, some of the ways that our interests overlapped and diverged, but also the ways these interests were tied to our social contexts—race and class and daily work. For example, Lee explained that her lack of classroom space was doubly difficult because she didn't have her own room at home either (an apartment she shares with her mother and teenager)—a very different set of circumstances than my own two-bedroom unit in medical residency housing that I shared with my husband and infant son. Lee had a wealth of insight into the new teacher evaluation system from her activist work, and from her work on-the-ground in schools, and fantastic ideas about how to frame our project. In that first meeting she spoke about “the importance of teachers' sharing their stories,” and how the ItAG might offer a “healing process” for participants—ideas which shaped the ItAG format and continued to inform my analysis.

Over the following months, we developed a fluid rhythm to our collaboration. I generally took the lead on the “homework”—developing documents like our ItAG publicity blurb and the working “syllabus”—and Lee responded with careful feedback. We began all of our meetings together checking in about personal matters—parenting, relationships, health—made all decisions for the



ItAG together, and later split the responsibilities of facilitating. Lee and I were co-conspirators in this work—brainstorming ideas, staying late after group sessions to debrief on group conversations, particular images or comments. She acted as a participant too (in ways that I couldn't as a non-K-12 classroom teacher), modeling enthusiastic participation and contributing her own critical insights on teacher practice, “Danielson” observations, and invisible work. I shared occasional disappointments with Lee (one snowy day when half the group canceled at the final hour) and my initial fears (would the teachers “get” the arts connection?), and talked through my emerging interpretations after the ItAG had concluded.

I have written with Luttrell about a “spectrum of participation” in regard to research with youth (Luttrell, Restler & Fontaine 2012) that ranges from Participatory Action Research in which participants are positioned as “co-researchers,” to adult-led studies with “adult researchers doing the editing, coding and interpreting.” And like the way Luttrell positions her longitudinal research with youth, my study falls somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. At various stages in the work, Lee was both co-researcher and participant. Her contributions are central to the shape and heart and questions of this study.

### *participants*

In December, Lee and I developed a title and blurb for the ItAG, which read as follows:

*Beyond Scores, Ranks & Rubrics: Re-imagining Teacher Evaluation*

Images of teacher evaluation (and teacher value) represented through scores and plotted on charts, graphs and rubrics have had a profound impact on shaping what matters in education and how society views teachers' contributions, capacities, and worth. In this ItAG we will come together to examine, critique, and challenge popular images and notions of teacher evaluation and consider, *what is (visual) evidence of good*

*teaching?* Reflecting on our own classrooms, experiences, and the new Advance teacher evaluation system, we will critically engage media images of teacher assessment and “speak back” to these images by creating our own, challenging both what gets measured and how. Through visual analysis, discussion, art and re-mix, we will re-imagine what we think teacher evaluation and teacher value could and should be.

NYCoRE publicized our ItAG along with four other course offerings to their community and we blasted our own social media networks as well. Nine teachers signed up to participate and all remained active throughout the duration of the ItAG and for an extra session and social meet-ups the following year.

The nine other participants also made substantial contributions, not only to our collaborative work, but to the form and drive of my research and analysis. Following the framing of ItAGs as a “co-constructed experience,” the teachers shaped the course of our group inquiry from start to finish—editing the “syllabus” at our first meeting, sharing out readings and websites, and designing our final arts-based action. Table 1 describes the participants by gender (8 women, 2 men), race (6 white, 4 people of color), grade level (9 high school, 1 middle school), and school setting (9 urban, 1 suburban).

Table 1. Teacher participant demographics

<i>TEACHERS</i>	10 PARTICIPANTS	
<i>BY GENDER</i>	8 WOMEN	2 MEN
<i>BY RACE</i>	6 WHITE PEOPLE	4 PEOPLE OF COLOR (1 BLACK, 1 BORICUA, 1 INDIAN, 1 PERSIAN)
<i>BY GRADE LEVEL</i>	9 HIGH SCHOOLS	1 MIDDLE SCHOOL <sup>22</sup>
<i>BY SCHOOL LOCATION</i>	9 URBAN (BROOKLYN, BRONX, MANHATTAN)	1 SUBURBAN (LONG ISLAND)

<sup>22</sup> One of the participants was currently teaching at a community college, but had taught at a middle school the year prior that was a pilot site for the new teacher evaluation framework. Her images, comments and contributions were mainly tied to this prior experience. A second participant was a doctoral student in media studies who was also an adjunct lecturer at a private university and a teaching artist at a Brooklyn public school.

Additionally, the teachers ranged in age from 25 to 43, and their experience in the classroom varied from one teacher who was midway through her first year to another in his seventeenth (half were in their first three years, and the other half had taught for five or more). They taught a variety of subjects including Media Arts, Math, Spanish, and Global History. There are so many other ways to locate these teacher-activists. Person, by person, here are some ways to know them:

*s a r a h*<sup>23</sup>

Jewish and butch-presenting with a mop of red hair and glasses, Sarah spoke in a matter-of-fact tone and with a great deadpan wit. She was in her second-year teaching and her first at Bronx Humanities<sup>24</sup>, the transfer school where Betty and Michelle (also participants) taught. Sarah talked openly about her queerness and her privileged upbringing; she grew up on the Upper East Side and attended an elite private high school. She was well-read on education policy and progressive issues and often brought articles or recent blog posts to our meetings.

*m i c h e l l e*

Michelle taught English at Bronx Humanities too, and in her fifth year at the school, she was the “veteran” of the three. Slim with long dark hair, white skin and vintage glasses, Michelle had an air of quiet authority. She wasn’t the most vocal member of our group, but whenever she spoke, we all seemed to pay special attention. Michelle identified strongly as a teacher and was particularly committed to her school’s mission. On her entrance survey, when asked to describe herself as an educator, she wrote, “2 sick days in 5 years 😊. <3 my students.”

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<sup>23</sup> All participants chose their own pseudonyms.

<sup>24</sup> The school names are pseudonyms.

### *b e t t y*

The third teacher from Bronx Humanities, and buddies with Michelle, Betty was in her third year teaching high school math. Petite with white skin, brown mid-length hair and wide, wondering blue eyes, she wore her emotions on her face, broadcasting any confusion or frustration out to the group. Betty came off as a girly-girl in some ways—her careful, curlicue handwriting and her love for “crafty things,” but she was tough too. She reflected openly on vulnerabilities, worries about tenure, while she articulated sophisticated critiques of “Danielson” (for example how her school administration used Danielson’s emphasis on “professional responsibilities” as a way to persuade teachers to take on extra weekend work without compensation.)

### *V*

With deep brown skin, hair in short twists, and a smile that seemed to fill her whole face, V was currently in her first year teaching media arts at Newcomer High School (a fact I didn’t compute for months, because she had none of the first-year teacher affect of panic/ self-deprecation/ overwhelm). V’s relative ease in this new role came partly from her substantial prior experience in education—~15 years working as a music teacher and teaching artist. And it came from her well-developed art practices (rock band drummer, spoken word poet, and filmmaker) and commitment to regular meditation too. In our first group meeting, V teared up talking about how she would have to tell a student the next day that despite being admitted to community college, he did not have the credits to graduate. Her emotional honesty, creativity and warmth brought out the same in others.

### *n i s h a*

Nisha taught with V at Newcomer, a high school for recently-arrived immigrants more than 86% of whom are emergent bilinguals. She has a quick, sarcastic wit, a great sense of humor, and a

sharp, analytical mind. With thick black hair and copper-colored skin, Nisha is one of those people that speaks in fully realized paragraphs and has a unique capacity to synthesize complex social theory while grounding it in her own experiences. She curses and laughs at herself, and interjects within her own arguments, and I often found myself jogging alongside, trying to keep up with the pace of her brain and mouth.

*e l i*

With cool nerd glasses and a beat up leather briefcase, Eli lives and breathes and bleeds “teacher.” On the entrance survey, he answered a question about how long he has worked in education, with the reply, “since birth.” Eli moved and spoke with energetic force, referring frequently to “us” and “we” (meaning teachers) and crafting jokes and stories that gestured to his career in acting and indie-rock performance and his 17+ years in the classroom as an English and theater teacher. Eli’s school, Shoreline High, is a case in point for the gross inequities of public education. This suburban school has 13% students of color, none whom receive free lunch, and a four-year graduation rate of 94%. As a long time Brooklynite, well-read education blogger and activist, he is familiar with the discourses and dynamics of struggling urban schools and easily joined the conversation, but his own frame of reference was quite different.

*p h o e b e*

Tall and athletic with pink, pale skin and reddish brown hair, Phoebe was one of the newest to the field. She had taught the year before at what she referred to as “a school in the South Bronx” and was now employed at a for-profit college for students working towards an Associate’s Degree. Her prior school participated in an early pilot launch of the Danielson evaluation system and she came to the ItAG with sharp critiques of the policy. Phoebe speaks articulately, easily, and with passion, connecting her own experiences to broader social concerns.

*r e b e c c a*

Rebecca worked with Lee at Clinton Tech as a Special Education teacher in her tenth year. A woman in her mid-forties with white skin and shoulder-length dark blond hair, Rebecca favored jeans and flannel shirts. Originally from Nebraska, she has a soft, warm way about her, and a quick smile. Like the others, she showed commitment to activism and to her students. After each meeting, she collected our apple cores and clementine peels for the compost bin at her community garden. And she twice rescheduled our one-on-one interview when student needs arose.

*a m i r*

Amir was a doctoral student at New York University (NYU), also studying school evaluation systems through the lens of technology. As a youthful, Persian-American, queer, forty-something, he came to the ItAG with a long history in activism, media-making, and teaching at both the college and high school level. In his reflections and positioning, he often slipped between perspectives as a teaching artist (he was currently working weekly at a Brooklyn public school), an NYU adjunct, and a qualitative researcher.

These teachers represent a range of racial, cultural, and class backgrounds; subject matter expertise; and experience in the field. Their identities and experiences were quite diverse, but in their orientations to educational discourse and their own teaching work, they shared two important attributes. The first is that all of the teachers were affiliated with the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE) either as subscribers to the group's listserve or members with active roles in leadership. Each of the participants shared a justice orientation towards educational policy and teacher work—race, class, and inequality were among the frames through which they considered their teaching and the profession more broadly. This ideological overlap shaped the

tone and possibilities for our work together. After the end of the second session Lee commented to me, “it seems like everyone knows each other already.” And it did. The group jelled quickly, and I suspect that some of the ease of connecting came from the comfort of shared values and perspectives—critiques about school testing culture, teacher evaluation policies, and a common commitment to education for social justice.<sup>25</sup>

Table 2. School demographics of teacher/activist participants

SCHOOL	STUDENTS OF COLOR	FREE/ REDUCED LUNCH	STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE IN 4 YEARS
<i>BRONX HUMANITIES</i>	98%	85%	20%
<i>CLINTON TECH</i>	97%	79%	73%
<i>MEDIA ARTS + DESIGN</i>	96%	100%	74%
<i>NEWCOMER HS</i>	90% (86% EMERGING BILINGUALS)	83%	54%
<i>SCHOLAR’S PREP</i>	99%	100%	N/A (MIDDLE SCHOOL)
<i>SHORELINE HS</i>	13%	0%	94%

The second feature that all of the teachers except Eli held in common was close experience with schools and/or students that faced significant intersectional struggles as low-income students of color. The ten teachers taught at six different institutions; three among the group taught at the same school, and two pairs each taught at two others. Compared to the suburban Shoreline High School, the five urban<sup>26</sup> schools (see Table 2) present stark statistics. The student bodies range

<sup>25</sup> Following Ginwright (2016), I refer to the participants as “teacher/activists” to highlight their multifaceted work and “blur boundaries” between these professional activities.

<sup>26</sup> “Urban” is a term I take up in this dissertation with some complexity and discomfort. I have long been uncomfortable with the use of “urban” as a code for Blackness, typically by white people, as if they were afraid to utter the word “Black,” as if Blackness was a slur. From my nonprofit education work, I understood that demographic shifts were complicating the divisions between urban/ suburban/ and rural—that immigrants are settling outside of urban zones, that cities are gentrifying, that some suburbs are Browner and poorer than they were in the white flight of the 1950s and 60s. And yet, in the space of my study, the split between the nine urban and one suburban teacher is meaningfully intertwined with race and class distinctions. I use “urban” to reference these particular distinctions and as a stylistic shorthand, but with a continued commitment to question and critique these blunt, racialized designations.

from 90% to 99% students of color; one school serves 86% emergent bilinguals; 76% to 100% of the student body receives free or reduced lunches; and four-year graduation rates range from 20% to 74%, compared to the 69% citywide average.

The schools themselves have different cultures, different styles of school leadership, and different missions—one is designed for recently arrived immigrants, another is a transfer school, a third focuses on technology, etc. But for all these urban teachers, part of their job entailed showing up each day with and for kids who face layers of adversity on top of the typical trials of adolescence—students who live in poverty (and must navigate all the stressors that come with it), young people burdened with societal and institutional racism, students who have recently immigrated to the US and must learn English at breakneck speed, teens who are returning to school after having dropped out.

These dynamics shaped many aspects of the teachers' routines, official and unofficial responsibilities, and their ways of seeing teacher labor. When they spoke and made images about their practice, responsibilities, and students, it was in dialogue with these particular conditions—with the work of teaching at “small schools”<sup>27</sup> in the urban landscape of New York City, teaching mostly Black and Brown students with very limited economic resources, in the wake of neoliberal education policies that punish schools for failure, a moment of profound instability and insecurity for these students, their teachers, and administrators. These factors are like stones forming a loose circle around the teachers' words, drawings, and multimedia images, a porous border within which we came together, markers on the ground that locate what I/we/they mean when we talk and make and write about teaching work.

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<sup>27</sup> References the “small schools movement” under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, where large high schools were broken up into several smaller institutions that share a building.



## STUDY DESIGN: DATA COLLECTION

### *gatherings*<sup>28</sup>

From January to April 2014, the ten teachers, Lee, and I gathered weekly from 5pm to 7pm in a small conference room at the Graduate Center. Lee arrived at 4, and after checking in we talked through and finalized our agenda for the afternoon, sharing any potential concerns and allocating facilitation responsibilities. We brought some of the core rituals of NYCoRE—a rotating roster of potluck snacks, check-ins, icebreakers, and interactive activities—to each of our ItAG meetings. We used these tools to connect and build community, and as a way to decenter our authority as facilitators. Often, after check-ins we would turn to an article or image brought in by one of the participants or shared online in between meetings—news about New York’s decision to delay evaluation tied to Common Core, a report-back on a local activist conference on teacher evaluation, images of ed-tech and the “networked teacher.” Then, we typically moved towards an extended arts-based activity, such as visual analysis of value-added ratings or “invisible work images,” making teacher practice maps, or sketching plans for our arts-based action. (An overview of each session with meeting dates, agenda activities, and “at home” projects is included in Appendix A.) All together, we met nine times as a group including one six-hour day at the NYCoRE conference where we launched our art-activist project. I audio-recorded and transcribed six of these sessions<sup>29</sup> and completed fieldnotes following each group meeting.

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<sup>28</sup> I use several terms to describe the ItAG gatherings: workshops, sessions, meetings. None of the terms feels entirely appropriate. These words are meant to suggest the educational aims of these group “meetings” while de-naturalizing the power and organizational assumptions of teacher-student dynamics.

<sup>29</sup> I made an intentional decision not to audio-record the first two sessions in order to focus on building trust and connections among the group. I introduced my research briefly at our first meeting and at the second meeting I gave a 10-minute presentation on my research questions and interests, and distributed consent forms to all participants. Everyone expressed written and verbal comfort with audio-recording subsequent meetings and I began “taping” the following session. I did not tape the Saturday conference event because of the challenging logistics and ethics of recording in a busy tiled hallway with many conference-goers who had not provided consent.

## *voicethread*

In between workshops, we used the social media platform VoiceThread to continue in-person conversations by posting workshop notes and photos. We also shared and commented on digital files around particular themes such as invisible work and posted relevant media on the topic of teacher evaluation (for example, participants uploaded policy documents, articles, and found pictures). The cloud-based application VoiceThread allows users to upload, share, and discuss a wide range of digital files—documents, images, audio files, and videos—and to comment on these posts with text, webcam video, audio recordings, or digital drawings. Significantly, with VoiceThread we were able to set up a private, password-protected group so that while posts were visible to the teacher participants, they were not accessible or searchable to others. This was especially important for teachers who wished to express critiques of their school policies and/or administrations. VoiceThread displays posts in a slideshow format and preserves comments along with the posts, enabling asynchronous interaction among users.

While back and forth discussion never took off in our use of VoiceThread, the platform served two main purposes in our work. The first was to bookmark ideas, images or articles for further conversation, and, as I noted above, we typically began each workshop by reviewing recent activity on the VoiceThread. This gave participants an opportunity to raise issues that they felt had not been adequately addressed in person such as the role of technology in new evaluation policies, or reflections on recent teacher professional development. This practice gave continuity to our work and helped to bridge the weeklong gap between sessions. It also worked to decenter Lee's and my authority as facilitators. While we began our first session by co-creating the "syllabus" as group, and verbally encouraged participants to recommend readings or subject matter, this online forum provided an ongoing space for participants to amplify or redirect our activities.

VoiceThread's second purpose was that of an archive. We photographed notes and visual work from six of nine sessions, allowing teachers who had to miss a workshop to “catch up” and join the conversation. It was also helpful in the final part of our work together when we organized our “action”—an interactive art project designed to engage a broader public of educators. As we planned for the project, we scrolled back through archived texts and images to highlight key themes and we kept a running tally of project ideas (with visual examples and links) on the site.<sup>30</sup> Each week, I traced new developments on the VoiceThread platform and wrote up descriptions, reflections and analysis in weekly VoiceThread memos. These memos together with the images and comments that teachers made on the VoiceThread site comprised an important component of my multimodal data.

*the “action”: those who can*

Part of the special structure of Inquiry to Action Groups is that they build towards something—a collective “action,” designed and carried out by the participants. Some ItAG groups have launched multi-year projects and long-term collaborations such as “Teach Dream,” a group of educators who continue several years later to organize around the support of undocumented students. But even when the action is more circumscribed, the efforts of working towards a shared

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<sup>30</sup> The platform had a few limitations—the first being that in order to create a password-protected group and post more than five VoiceThreads (text and image slideshows), we needed to purchase a paid account (\$99 for a yearlong educator’s license). And while users can preserve VoiceThreads by taking screenshots, the platform charges a fee to export “threads” as MOV/MP4 files. Second, while the interface was generally straightforward and easy to use, users did have to register for an account (a minor barrier to participation) and there were a few technical glitches (for example, an extra step in order to share posts with the group that some found confusing). Finally, when viewing articles or pictures in VoiceThread, it’s difficult (though possible) to view the file in isolation. That is to say, the image is framed by the VoiceThread architecture—a comment bar at the bottom, buttons for zooming out/in, for going “full screen,” and thumbnail images identifying the account user and file creator. These black-bordered features and the pale gray “Helvetica” text have a sort of institutional (in that they are standardized) and techie-feel, coloring the viewers’ perception of the media.

goal can build closeness among participants, while the challenge of channeling the learning process into activism encourages reflection and collective analysis.

Participants had determined at our very first meeting that the action would be arts-based in some way and would launch at the March NYCoRE conference, but we spent a full three sessions (and time between) planning for our final project. At our fifth meeting, Lee and I reviewed our work up to that point—the images we had looked at and made, articles we had read, themes we had discussed. Together, participants brainstormed a list of central questions that emerged from our ItAG and in small groups. Writing independently, we developed a list of possible projects. Some of the final contenders included a video-based project where teachers could ask and answer each other's questions; a participatory body-map mural, where teachers would document their invisible work; and a sort of madlib slogan such as “Incessant testing doesn't make me a better teacher. \_\_\_\_\_ does,” that teachers' could fill out and post.

At the following session we broke into small groups (based on favored project ideas) and talked through the logistics, aesthetics, and potential limitations of each proposal and presented them back out to the group. We debated ideas back and forth and sometimes in circles. We talked about doing multiple projects vs. one, about language (not relying on jargon, being inclusive), about where the project should live—in a school, in public spaces, or online (and if so, on which platform). Ultimately, we decided<sup>31</sup> on a three-pronged action under the title, “Those who can,” as a retort to the expression, “those who can, do; those who can't, teach.” We set up a corner at the Saturday NYCoRE conference and posted large signs that asked, “What do you do as a

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<sup>31</sup> In order to come to a group decision, we spent one session generating ideas, and a second two-hour session building them out and debating them. We decided to do a two-part project and out of three final contenders, voted online in between sessions. Then at our final session before the conference, we broke into groups and planned for the action—making signs, gathering materials, talking through logistics and challenges.

teacher that can't be measured?" A long table full of postcards, markers, and collage materials invited participants to answer the question with words and images. Meanwhile, through an adjacent door, we set up a video booth—iPad and self-filming instructions on a small desk where participants could film themselves speaking to the same question in minute-long clips. And alongside the table we passed out “fact sheets” to passersby with tips for educators navigating the new evaluation system and resources for learning more.

We spent six hours at the conference “tabling,” talking to conference goers and encouraging them to record their own experiences of teaching and teacher evaluation policies. By day's end we had collected a total of 38 cards and 12 videos, some of which were made by ItAG teacher-participants. Following the conference, with input from all the teacher-participants, I digitized the cards and uploaded the images together with the 12 videos onto a Tumblr blog (<http://thosewhocanproject-blog.tumblr.com/>). We met two weeks later for a celebratory dinner and to explore the Tumblr site together, reflect on the project, and brainstorm about how to continue the work. We had conceived of the action as an ongoing piece—something that could grow online and take shape as a public dialogue with broader groups of teachers. That evening we talked about some ideas for engaging other teachers in our own social networks, NYCoRE, and beyond, but the efforts fizzled out with a busy end to the schoolyear and summer break. I take up only small portions of the visual data from the Tumblr blog in my dissertation although I plan to return to this multimedia project and explore both scholarly and activist avenues for carrying the work forward.

### *interviews*

In the month following the conclusion of the ItAG, I conducted image-elicitation interviews with all of the participants. I wanted to make space for the teachers to talk through their images and to

reflect on our collaborative experience of inquiry and action. I designed the interviews around a semi-structured, image-elicitation protocol. I printed high-resolution color-copies of three groups of images produced during the ItAG—the teacher practice maps, “invisible work images”, and “Those Who Can” postcards made by a combination of participants and NYCoRE conference attendees. I invited the participants to scan the images and to pull out the ones they made along with three or four others that they wished to discuss. I concluded the interview with time to discuss the videos (from the “Those Who Can” blog), eliciting their ideas about the future of the online project, and with time for them to ask me questions. We always began with the images they made and I always began by asking them to describe the image in front of us. Often I followed up by asking, “What kinds of emotions does this image bring up for you?” (The complete protocol is reproduced in Appendix B.) The first sections, where teacher-participants discussed their own and others’ images, were the thickest and most emotionally rich parts of the interview. Due to participant fatigue and/ or technological issues, we often spoke only briefly of the videos.

I invited teachers who worked at the same school to meet together, anticipating that their shared context might open up productive dialogue. Only three teachers elected to speak as a group (Sarah, Betty, and Michelle), so all of the other interviews were one-on-one. Participants chose the locations (including my office, coffee shops, a pizza restaurant, the teachers’ school, and a park) and the interviews lasted from 1.5-2.75 hours. I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews and took pictures of the images that each participant selected to discuss.

All of the interviews were rich with context and emotion. I got to ask questions about and hear the stories behind the images teachers had made as well as pieces of their own autobiographical stories—their upbringings (cues about class and culture in the form of family dynamics, parents’ employment, and undergrad alma maters), relationships with colleagues and administrators, and

prior teaching experiences. Perhaps because the interviews took place at least three months into our relationships and collaborative work, the teachers really opened up to me in these discussions, sharing vulnerabilities and sensitive emotions. These dialogues play a central role in complicating and clarifying the visual and textual data that came out of the ItAG.

*multimodality: greater than the sum of its parts*

I used a wide variety of methods to make sense of my multimodal data drawing from practices of visual analysis, narrative analysis and arts-based methods. As with the interviews, the participants' images served as an anchoring guide, but my process of analysis was in constant motion, back and forth actions with the eyes and hands—looking and reading, writing and making: making meaning in the overlapping and interstitial spaces between words (transcripts, fieldnotes, audio files, theory) and images (drawings, photos, videos).

As an artist, I came to this work somewhat suspicious of words (vis-à-vis pictures). In art school, I was initially forbidden and later discouraged from “talking first” about my own work in critiques. Instead, I was instructed to let my classmates/ artists/ visitors look and share feedback unbiased by my explanations. The theory behind this broadly practiced approach acknowledges the complex relationship between seeing and knowing (Berger 1972). For example, once we learn that the oblong shape is a shoe, it's hard to un-see its shoe-ness, and then, when we learn who the shoe belonged to, and the banal or compelling story behind it, we see the work differently once again. I often noticed how the more I understood about an image or body of work, and the more I grew to know the maker and her aims/ preoccupations/ challenges, the more I liked or held interest with it. Was my first impression—the raw, unexplained reading—more pure? More true?

Part of looking before “knowing” (why or how, who or what) is a way of privileging and honing visual skills, valuing our own uncertain understandings alongside the artist’s authoritative interpretation. Luttrell takes up a similar process in her courses on visual research, training students into “a structured, sequenced immersion intended to catalyze researcher/adult reflexivity about what is seen and interpreted about working class children and working class childhoods” (Fontaine & Luttrell 2015, p.44). Through this approach, emerging researchers are invited to interpret children’s images before viewing the children’s own explanations in the form of interview videos and transcripts. This process, often quite uncomfortable, encourages researcher reflexivity alongside space for questioning the process of analysis. It raises a challenge: how can a researcher’s positionality both open up and close off insights and interpretations?

In working with multimodal data, I believe that preserving space for isolated visual and textual analysis is key. However, the most exciting, challenging, and fruitful spaces of analysis come through in moments of exchange, translating or better yet, translanguaging word and image. Garcia and Wei (2014, p.137) define translanguaging as “the way in which bilinguals use their complex semiotic repertoire to act, to know, and to be.” In the way that multilinguals draw strategically on a varied repertoire of social and linguistic practices to think, learn, and communicate effectively, I also draw on a range of media, modalities, visual and textual grammars and dialects to make sense of my multimodal data.

I come to my dissertation with my whole self and history as daughter, mother, student, economically-privileged, white woman, wife, friend, Brooklyn-born, non-conformer, sister, skeptic, worrier, activist, compassionate feeler, thinker, and maker. I bring these selves to my research as I believe all researchers do—our perspectives and experiences necessarily shape our work—but I reflect on them and speak them out consciously in the feminist tradition that I am training into. Art-



making is like a language in the sense that it has rules and structures and vocabularies of marks and ideas, but also in the sense that it shapes how I see and know and learn. As Patrick Slattery writes of his own arts-based educational research practice:

I believe that I am only effective and competent as an artist, researcher, and educator when I holistically integrate all three of these dimensions of my work. It is impossible to separate the three. Whenever anyone attempts to categorize my work, the results are disastrous. Suddenly, I no longer “fit” anywhere. (2003, p.195)

In this way, I bring my artist self to my analysis. For one, I cannot cut it off. Furthermore, I can most effectively engage and make sense of the research when I “holistically integrate” these ways of seeing, knowing, and communicating. My dissertation is multimodal, filled with images and hyperlinks, spread across Microsoft Word documents and Scalar web pages that retrieve data through Vimeo and Soundcloud. My data, my process of analysis, and the sense that I make/ made/ am making takes shape in words and sounds and pictures. As I see it, my job is to put these various media and modalities in dialogue to see what they have to say and teach each other, to hold up and draw out the affordances of each medium—what is best expressed as written word? What comes through in the digital photograph? But especially, to join words with sounds with images in multimodal assemblage, in ways that are greater than the sum of their parts.

## *coding*

My first analytical step was to create an image catalogue for all the significant image data<sup>32</sup>—assigning each image a unique number and recording all the information I had on the maker.<sup>33</sup> Next, after reviewing the images and relevant fieldnotes, interview and workshop transcripts, I developed a list of fourteen codes, which are detailed in Table 3. The codes are comprised mainly of common themes in the images and different discourses of value in teaching work represented in the content of the images such as time, money, critical thinking, etc. One code (twelve) details the format of the image—text, picture, or both, and codes thirteen and fourteen are meant to provide information about the maker—both gender and whether s/he participated in the ItAG.

The process of coding the images raised certain tensions—for example, how to parse issues of “testing” from “education policies.” It also highlighted definitional questions, pushing me to critically consider what demonstrations of care or love might look like. In a reflective memo on the coding process (2015) I wrote:

Care for students is very clearly marked in certain images such as P33 where the maker references ‘creating another family in the classroom.’

However, in others, it is more indirectly implied. For example, in P32, the artist writes ‘[I value] student voice and identity in my teaching.’ While she

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<sup>32</sup> There are several other groups of images/ texts that were produced throughout the course of the ItAG that I don’t take up in this analysis. They include: pictures and writings from a participatory teacher evaluation timeline; a series of questions that teachers wrote and posed to each other at one of our workshop sessions; several found images/ documents that were posted to the VoiceThread; and images we gathered as inspiration for the final action. I chose not to include these texts/ images in the catalogue or to analyze them in the dissertation because I had an excess of rich visual and multimodal data to work with.

<sup>33</sup> Some of the images were completed by teachers at the NYCoRE conference. Because of the dynamics of the project which involved capturing the attention of passersby at a busy event, and the potentially sensitive nature of the information, we did not collect data on participants who contributed to the project. Half of the postcards were created by ItAG members, so I recorded their demographic information including race, gender, number of years teaching, grade level and subject matter. I also recorded any demographic information I had for the other submissions.

does not use the word care and does not reference community or hugs, I argue that her emphasis on “student voice and identity” reflects a caring orientation towards her students.

Coding also helped attune me to central themes in the data. Following on the subject of “care,” as I expanded the borders of my definition beyond obvious displays of nurturance, I found this code nearly everywhere I looked. For example, as I detail in Chapter Seven, through my analysis of a series of drawings called “teacher practice maps” I found 212 of the 214 items (images and words) outlined in the ten teacher maps as tied to carework. Coding helped guide my eyes and hands towards particular images, questions, and themes which I then took up in detailed image analyses.

Table 3. Data dictionary

#	Code	Meaning
1	Students/ Youth	Image references students using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
2	Tests/ Testing	Image references tests using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
3	Time	Image references time (e.g. teachers’ hours) using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
4	Money	Image references money (teachers’ expenditures; financial incentives in the system, etc.) using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
5	Art/ Creative practice	Image references creative practice (of students or teachers) using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
6	Education policies (current or potential)	Image references current or potential education policies (or dominant practices) using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
7	Teacher support/ peer mentorship	Image references teacher support or peer to peer teacher mentorship using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
8	Critical thinking (student or teacher)	Image references critical thinking (on the part of students or teachers) using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
9	Love	Image references love using text or pictures (like hearts) (0=No, 1=Yes)
10	Care	Image references care using text or pictures (0=No, 1=Yes)
11	Out of school	Image references out of school (or classroom) activities, responsibilities or circumstances (0=No, 1=Yes)
12	Text/ Image	Image contains text only (0); image contains pictures only (1); image contains text and pictures (2)
13	Maker	Image was created by ItAG member (0=No, 1=Yes)
14	Gender	Image was created by a female (0), male (1), unknown (2)

*site-modality: image analysis*

My approach to image analysis builds on Rose's (2007) concept of image "sites and modalities" as a framework for considering the multifaceted aspects of visual data. Rose suggests that images must be interpreted at three specific sites: the site of image production, the site of the image itself, and the site of "audiencing." Further, she advocates three primary modalities or analytical lenses for consideration at each site: technological—how is the image made and seen?; compositional, as in the formal and material qualities of an image; and social, which implies the "range of economic, social, and political relations, institutions, and practices that surround an image and through which it is seen and used" (p. 13). In the diagram below, I built out a visual model for Rose's site-modality heuristic and developed my own set of guiding questions for each intersectional node of analysis.

Using this chart as a guide, I created files for each image that included descriptive memos, and excerpted transcripts and fieldnotes with comments and texts from different "audiencing sessions" including ItAG workshops, interviews, and discussions with the Collaborative Seeing Studio and my arts-research writing group, two interpretive communities that provided feedback on my emerging analyses.

Table 4. Site-modality heuristic (Rose 2007)

SITES	M O D A L I T I E S		
	TECHNOLOGICAL	COMPOSITIONAL	SOCIAL
PRODUCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-How is the image made?</li> <li>-What tools and media are used?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What is the image genre? And how do genre conventions shape the image production?</li> <li>-What other representations is this image in dialogue with (replicating, contesting, etc.)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Who made the image?</li> <li>-What is the social positionality of the maker(s)?</li> <li>-How do their political, social, and economic positions shape the image production?</li> </ul>
IMAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-How are the formal elements of the image shaped by the tools of production?</li> <li>-What technological affordances and limitations are built into the image?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What are the visual and spatial structures of the image?</li> <li>-What media forms does the image include?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What political, social, and economic perspectives or signs are represented in the image?</li> </ul>
AUDIENCING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What tools and technologies are employed in the image circulation and display?</li> <li>-How might these elements influence audience reaction?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What are the formal components of the display?</li> <li>-How might the formal elements of display impact its reception?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Who is the image audience (intended and actual)?</li> <li>-How do people (maker, participants, others) respond to the image? What do they say?</li> <li>-How might audience positionality affect reception?</li> </ul>

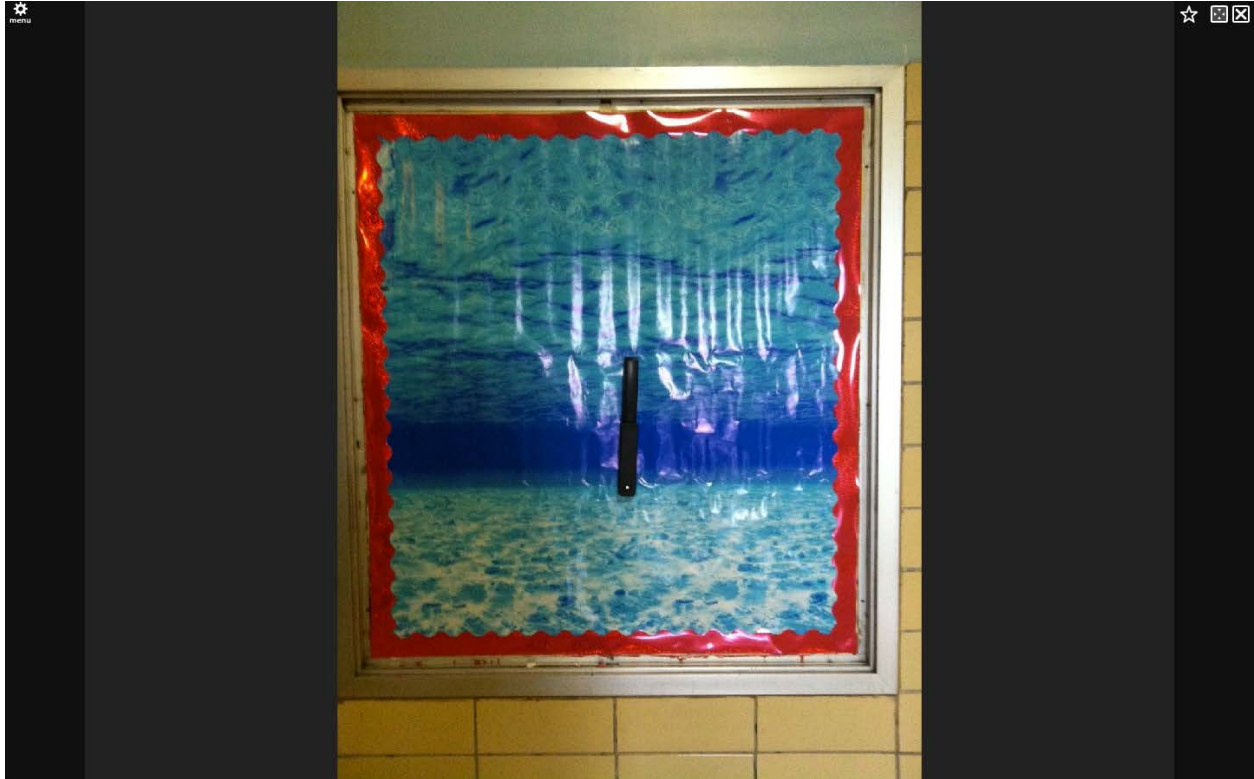


Figure 5. Michelle's invisible work, school bulletin board [digital photograph]

For example, Michelle posted a file (Figure 5) on VoiceThread as an example of her invisible work:

- A descriptive memo on the image, organized around the site-modality framework
- Transcripts from our group discussion about the image
- Transcripts from Michelle's interview discussion about her photograph
- Transcripts from other interviews in which teachers (Phoebe, Lee, Eli) chose to discuss the picture
- And fieldnotes from a presentation on the image and my developing analysis to the Collaborative Seeing Studio (a visual research group composed of faculty and doctoral students)

I looked at the image and read the texts in conversation and then used these files to draw out salient themes and theoretical insights. In the case of this photo, Michelle spoke about the image—

an “unclaimed” bulletin board that she decided to decorate after school (the vertical black mark is actually a stapler that got stuck as she was working)—in the context of school regulations for hallway bulletin board design (they must be changed by “x” date, they must display student work, rubrics, etc.) She spoke about the mixed messages that she and other teachers receive about bulletin boards—on the one hand administrators communicate that the boards “are very important indicators of what’s happening inside classrooms,” but on the other hand, Michelle’s work in designing and decorating this bulletin board (which ultimately displayed “beautiful maps that our students made with their educational history, how they got to our school and what struggles they had”) went wholly unrecognized. Building on Michelle’s comments I searched through transcripts for other discussions of school bulletin boards and school aesthetics and wrote up a memo linking this image (and the surrounding narratives) to dynamics of visibility and invisibility in teacher practice that later shaped my analysis of teachers’ invisible work and the images I discuss in Chapter Five. This process of multi-sited visual analysis in conversation with narrative analysis served as an organizing frame for the multimodal data, a tool for probing patterns, and for preserving multiple meanings and interpretations.

### *arts-based methods*

Part of my back-and-forth analytical process between image and word (and video and sound) involved making art. I created an artistic body of work<sup>34</sup> including drawings, collage, videos, and sound works as a way of learning and knowing my data and as a form of scholarship—a way to communicate my insights and findings both outside of and together with words and academic texts. These works follow in the tradition of artists like LaToya Ruby Frazier and Tania Bruguera

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<sup>34</sup> Several works including a series of animated videos linked with the Tumblr and a series of inkwash paintings and collages drawn from the teacher practice maps are not presented in the dissertation. I am still working through aesthetically, logistically, and conceptually how to merge the written work with the visual. And I think that some fear about the visual works being misunderstood, or not taken seriously, held me back from presenting them.

who take up research methods in their art practices to make work and make change around issues of disinvestment in low income communities of color (Frazier 2011) and social movements for immigrant rights (Bruguera 2010-2015). My artwork also follows in traditions from the other way around—researchers who take up art methods to make meaning, represent their findings, or communicate with a broader public audience. Examples of artworks include Nick Sousanis' (2015) graphic novel “Unflattening,” which joins words with images to evoke issues of dimensionality and multiple vantage points, and like Stephanie Springgay’s close up video-stills of human hair (2003) woven with text to call forth questions of tactility, embodiment and “body knowledge.”

These artworks—key elements of my methodology—are presented alongside the dissertation through a companion website that I call a “digital assemblage.” I decided to locate these portions of my dissertation online because I wanted a frame that would support text together with image, sound, and video. Scalar—the digital publishing platform that hosts my site—is a free, open-source platform developed out of University of Southern California’s Alliance for Networking Visual Culture and specifically designed for multimodal scholarly work. I chose Scalar for the assemblage for these and other structural affordances including flexible sequencing (data can be linked in linear fashion through a “path” or in a decentralized arrangement via “tagging”), built in data visualizations, and robust annotations and commenting functions.

[The digital assemblage \(http://scalar.usc.edu/works/re-visualizing-care\)](http://scalar.usc.edu/works/re-visualizing-care) is organized around two groups of artworks—*rubbing every object and surface in betty’s math classroom*, a visual-ethnographic intervention that I carried out in Betty’s (one of the teacher participant’s) classroom; and *excessive practice*, a series of audio works, drawn transcriptions and videos that I made in relation to a group of teacher drawings called *teacher practice maps*. The digital assemblage joins these artworks with two chapter-length texts that combine methodological work with theoretical



analysis and reflexive writing. Positioned as analytical experiments, creative works, countervisualities (and perhaps a genre of arts-based scholarship that defies established categories), the assemblage invites viewers/ readers into new ways of seeing and engaging with the themes of the dissertation.

*trustworthiness, ethics and collaborative seeing*

Collaborative seeing is a reflexive and iterative approach to inquiry developed by Luttrell in her work with pregnant teens (2003) and expanded through her longitudinal visual study with working class and immigrant youth, “Children Framing Childhoods” (2010; Lico & Luttrell 2011; Fontaine & Luttrell 2015). Collaborative seeing combines an epistemological stance, a set of methodological protocols, and an analytic process, which aims to address the structural imbalances of power embedded in research relationships and preserve the multiplicity of meanings that are co-constructed between researcher and researched.

I apprenticed into the frames and practices of collaborative seeing as a student in Luttrell’s class on visual research; as a research assistant on her study, *Looking Back*; and as a founding member of the Collaborative Seeing Studio (CSS), a collective of emerging and established visual researchers who share, critique, and sometimes make work together. Part of the work of CSS involved joining together to trace the edges of this practice. As a group, we built on Wendy’s frame to outline six central tenets of our approach to visual research: reaching multiple publics, youth-centered methods, an image and a million words, multiple audience eyes, a “need to know more” stance, and larger social forces. Each of these tenets contributes to the positions, values and methods of my own study as well as my ethical grounding. My work is shaped by several ethical commitments to justice-centered research that come out of the collaborative seeing framework.

### *relationships and reflexivity*

My study pivots around values of research relationships and reflexivity. Luttrell (2010, p.162) writes, “As a feminist researcher, I think of validity in terms of authenticity and reciprocity established through my research relationships.” This ethic guided my research design and collaborative relationships with the ten teacher participants. I see the drives for authenticity and reciprocity in my longtime affiliation with NYCoRE and my approach—consistent with ItAG structures—to sharing power, leadership, and responsibility across our group. It is woven into ongoing friendships that have grown from the study, and continued dialogue about the work (and my subsequent art projects) with more than half of the teachers (Betty, Phoebe, Sarah, V, Lee, Amir, and Michelle). It is present in my deep sense of commitment to represent the participants and their works faithfully and with respect.

These relationships are also grounded in my own reflexive work—a consistent practice of turning questions and discomforts back on myself. Reflexivity in the space of my study looked like frequent field notes and memos in which I explored and questioned my decisions, opinions, and emotions, and the reflective accounts that are woven throughout the dissertation about my positionality, interests, and blind spots as an economically privileged white woman, as a doctoral student outside of K-12 spaces, as an artist, and as a mother. It also comes through in my artwork and methodological writings which are meant to communicate my thinking and decision-making in processes of data collection and analysis. Furthermore, my approach grounds this relational work in the context of “larger social forces,” social dynamics, policies, discourses, and identities. Horwitz writes about “critical reflection” as “a call to explore individual context, learn about all involved stakeholders, and create tactics of action. Critical reflection,” she asserts, “is the systemic analysis of practice used to address issues of inequity” (2012, p.15). In the context of my study, critical reflection guided my analysis of participants and their images, research relationships and my own

positionality in broader social contexts of race, class, gender, culture and sexuality as well as educational policies and initiatives (such as the small schools movement, and colocation), and social discourses on teaching and women's work.

*an image and a million words: multimodality and un mundo donde  
quepan muchos mundos (a world where many worlds fit)*

These orientations to relationships and critical reflexivity shape my approach to working with images in research. Writing with the Collaborative Seeing Studio, we rephrased the popular saying, "an image is worth a thousand words" to emphasize the way that images and words can work together to make meaning(s). Images, in this construction, are not meant to "speak for themselves" or "stand on their own." Neither the children's photographs in Luttrell's study, nor the teachers' images here contain a single, self-explanatory truth. Rather, I understand images as socially situated, their meanings made in dialogue between maker and looker, researcher and researched, and across the sites and modalities of Rose's heuristic. This epistemological orientation shaped my research design and approach to image analysis together with "multiple audience eyes." For example, Michelle's photograph (Figure 5) was audienced across more than five settings and relational groupings:

- first, when she posted it on our group VoiceThread, where participants made digital comments
- during our (face-to-face) ItAG session where we discussed Michelle's image along with (and in dialogue with) other "invisible work" images made by participants
- in my small group interview with Michelle (and Betty and Sarah)
- across several other participant interviews (with Lee, Eli, and Phoebe)

— And finally when I shared the picture along with my emerging questions with my interpretive community, the Collaborative Seeing Studio.

In this way, the many audiencing sessions with participants and other scholars shape my analysis. They also act as a measure of trustworthiness (Mishler 2000) and confidence in the findings (Lincoln & Guba 1985) across multiple interpretations in conversation with my own. I am committed to preserving these many readings and seeings in the dissertation as well. I think about this like the Zapitasta vision for “un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos” or a world where many worlds fit (Marcos 1996). It is a vision for autonomy and plurality; a Mexico with space for many languages, ways of life, and forms of government. In the space of my dissertation, I work to build a container for plural meanings, a dialogue between contextualized interpretations that can remain open and not wholly resolved. Luttrell considers this approach yet another dimension of reflexivity. As she writes:

I think of being reflexive as an exercise in sustaining multiple and sometimes opposing emotions, keeping alive contradictory ways of theorizing the world, and seeking compatibility not necessarily consensus. Being reflexive means expanding rather than narrowing the psychic, social, cultural, and political fields of analysis. (2010, p.516)

This multiplicity and my efforts to contain-- both internally and in the space of this document-- many contradictory emotions, ways of seeing and theorizing the world, works towards expanding the field of analysis, and the ground from which we can see and value teachers and teacher work.

Finally, my use of arts-based methods and the open-access online portion of my dissertation are also meant to expand the methodological, modal, and political fields of knowledge and the reach of this work to multiple publics. As Silva (2016) writes of her own multimodal research, “A major

part of what I consider my ethical imperative for this project is to make it accessible and useful to multiple audiences.” I share this aim and approach to building a multimodal, online dissertation. The digital assemblage both echoes and honors the intentions of the teacher participants to engage broader publics of educators through the group action—a participatory Tumblr site with a public, digital dimension. And in the space of these Scalar and Tumblr sites, I hope to invite others into questioning/ critiquing/ challenging/ and re-visualizing teaching beyond the scores, ranks, and rubrics of dominant policies and frames.

## **REFLEXIVE INTERLUDE**

### *seeing (& not seeing) care in context*

*My study focuses on teachers, and in our group inquiry, art projects, and individual interviews, we concentrated on their teacher labor. So I have little direct knowledge of their students beyond school demographic statistics and the teachers' stories, often communicated before or after our "official sessions," during ice-breakers or snack breaks. I feel deeply ambivalent about my own representation of these youth I don't know—loathe to locate them first in terms of their trauma or portray them as a series of dehumanized statistics about violence, racism, or scarcity, despite the very real presence of these conditions. This discomfort manifested as a kind of blinders that prevented me from seeing portions of my qualitative data—interview transcripts, teacher images, and fieldnotes—for nearly two years. Whenever a teacher would reference the extreme hardship of her students in terms of poverty, incarceration, violence or emotional distress, I unconsciously, but in retrospect, systematically, buried it. In practice this looked like the absence of activity. For example, in my semi-structured interviews, when Rebecca spoke about her student's suicidality or Michelle talked about formerly incarcerated students, I didn't follow up with questions; in fieldnotes and memos I didn't write or reflect on the teachers' language or insights about their students. I was doing this learned and now instinctive thing of refusing the deficit script. It wasn't that the teachers spoke about their students in deficit terms, on the contrary they carefully avoided stigmatizing language and worked hard to foreground their students' strength and humanity. Rather, I was (again unconsciously) determined not to re-represent their stories in any way that might be even distantly affiliated with well-worn narratives about the overwhelming struggles of "inner-city kids," and their valiant teacher saviors (white, well-meaning, or otherwise). It was only after many readings and re-readings, and significantly, attending a talk with Shawn Ginwright on the subject of "radical healing," (and*

*subsequently reading his two books on the topic 2009 and 2016), that I began to see parts of my data that were hidden in plain sight, and started to unravel my own reflective process.*

*I have been learning and unlearning this way of seeing and not seeing over many years through my own political education and various passages of reflection, acceptance, and self-hatred around my race, class privilege, and location in the world of social justice activism. One important early memory in this process took place in Oaxaca, Mexico in a small windowless side-room at the Universidad de la Tierra (University of the Land), an NGO founded by Gustavo Esteva dedicated to promoting radical autonomy through informal education, ecological action, and collaboration with indigenous communities. I sat across the table from Gustavo for the first of what would become frequent one-on-one talks about my work, his work, Ivan Illich (1971; 1973; 1978), collaborative projects and a host of other topics. I'm not sure what prompted our meeting on this day or what question I had posed, but Gustavo told me a story (as he often did) about a transformational moment in his own early professional life. He was, as he recounted, at the start of his career in "development," (a term he would later renounce and critically deconstruct in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, Sachs, Ed. 1992) responsible for supervising the allocation of grant funds to a poor Oaxacan indigenous village. As he explained it, there were no specific stipulations about how the money had to be spent, but the funders, Gustavo included, believed the funds should be used to improve basic conditions such as water access or a rudimentary sewage system. The community refused, insisting over months of negotiation, that the money be put towards the construction of a dancehall. They would not explain their reasoning, but ultimately, Gustavo capitulated to what he believed to be a foolish and wasteful plan. It was only months after the dancehall was built, that community members revealed their intention: this was the only dancehall in the area and could be a valuable regional resource. The community planned to rent the space to neighboring villages for their annual fiestas, which would, in turn provide sustainable ongoing income that the community could put*

towards other basic services in years to come. They hadn't wanted to publicize the idea for fear that a neighboring community might imitate it. As Gustavo told it, this story was about the wisdom of people to know and act for themselves and the dangerous history of white Western paternalism. I took it as somber warning about my own limited capacity to see and know (and know what's best for) others and especially the Other, as in marginalized people, people of color, indigenous people, people from the Global South. I had for years parroted (and also taken to heart) the Jewish, middle class expression of social responsibility that is accrued through privilege. Like my social worker grandmother, politician grandfather, and community-engaged parents, I believed I was also compelled to "give back." But Gustavo was saying something else, not wholly contradicting the sentiment, but placing several topos (speed bumps) along my zealous route. He was telling me to slow down, to know this history, to listen with respect, and to not quite trust what I think I see.

Back and forth internal debates on these lessons and off-and-on paralysis about where I stand among them, have been with me ever since, particularly as I've pursued a career in social justice education as an educator, teacher educator, and scholar. The teachings have deepened through my work with youth—ideas about the way social context constructs "at risk" girlhood in my time at the North Philadelphia juvenile hall; through engagement with the writing of scholars like Eve Tuck (2009, 2010), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002) and others calling for the decolonization of research methods; and through working in teacher preparation with mostly white pre-service teachers to call forth and challenge their own assumptions about whiteness and teaching in "urban" settings. While my sense of responsibility as connected to my privilege persists, I feel new layers of responsibility as an educator and scholar not to re-inscribe the violence of deficit frames. Tuck (2009) writes about the lasting repercussions of a kind of critical research, which she calls "damage-centered research," to native populations and urban communities. As she explains (p.413),



*In damaged-centered research, one of the major activities is to document pain or loss in an individual, community, or tribe. Though connected to deficit models—frameworks that emphasize what a particular student, family, or community is lacking to explain underachievement or failure—damage-centered research is distinct in being more socially and historically situated. It looks to historical exploitation, domination, and colonization to explain contemporary brokenness, such as poverty, poor health, and low literacy. Common sense tells us this is a good thing, but the danger in damage-centered research is that it is a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community. Here's a more applied definition of damage-centered research: research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation.*

*Although I believe that the critical research of social problems—inequality, prejudice, poverty, exploitation, and on and on—can serve to catalyze social change, in the way that cellphone videos of the murders of Black people by police spark social action and force awareness of police brutality upon sections of the population who need convincing, we must acknowledge that these on-repeat narratives of violence and brokenness do damage to the very communities they are fighting for. Further, by defining individuals, communities, or tribes, singularly in terms of their oppression, these works obscure the fullness of identities, cultures, agency, and resistance. Despite my great debts to the vast body of critical research on the problems of urban schools and communities, I am quite clear as I try on and develop my researcher identity, that those are not my stories to tell. In my social location as a privileged white woman, in my persistent skepticism about what I can see and know about the Other, I choose to take up another lens. Rather than dishonesty or a Pollyanna-ish omission, I subscribe to what Tuck terms, a “desire-based framework,” which recognizes the “complex personhood,” (Gordon 1997 cited in Tuck 2009), agency, and wisdom of research subjects and collectivities. As Tuck (p.416) elaborates,*

*Desire-based research frameworks are concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives...Such an axiology is intent on depathologizing the experiences of dispossessed and disenfranchised communities so that people are seen as more than broken and conquered. This is to say that even when communities are broken and conquered, they are so much more than that—so much more that this incomplete story is an act of aggression.*

*This philosophy shapes my core theoretical framing, the belief following Foucault about the tangle of power-knowledge-discourse (that power is widely distributed and enacted through dialectical discourse and truth regimes) and the productivity of countervisualities (Mirzoeff) that can interrupt, refuse or re-imagine controlling images (Collins 1990) and dialogues. It also shapes my research design in several ways—1) I deliberately designed a study with teachers, a population I have worked with for years and identify with (having worked for some time in public middle and high schools); 2) I recruited participants from the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE) a social justice organization that I have been affiliated with since 2006; and 3) I organized my research around the framework of NYCoRE's Inquiry to Action Groups (ItAG), a structure that required that I partner with a full-time K-12 teacher of color, helped de-center my researcher authority (see more in Chapter Two), and incorporated a collective social action into our group work. Thus instead of tracing the damages of high-stakes testing as it trickles up from students to teachers in new evaluation regimes, my study asks, "How does a group of radical teachers understand the value of their work as teachers?" In this way, by specifically recruiting "radical" teacher/ activists, my project takes for granted the dehumanizing and prejudiced policies of school accountability culture to consider how teachers creatively navigate in the wiggle room, and how they move beyond dominant discourses and neoliberal framings of teacher (added) value to conceptualize their own work.*

*This goes part of the way to explaining why I missed the cues, the stories teachers were telling me about student hardship and the profound links between their students' socio-cultural backgrounds and their own caring work. I had decided before I took this study on, that I would explicitly not write about youth in terms I had grown to detest (even to debunk them): at-risk, low-income, minorities, over-age and under-credited, English language learners, urban. I had devoured the literature on the damages of neoliberal school policies, testing culture, and teacher evaluation (Lipman; Ravitch; Leonardo; McNeill; Berliner; O'hanian; Amrein-Beardsley; Saltman; Vinson & Ross; Ross & Gibson; Giroux; Picower & Mayorga; Hursh; etc.) triple underlining and whispering emphatic "yeses" into dog-eared pages. I was inspired by the intellectual artistry of these works that joined social policy with empirical research, history and theory to make sense of the complex tangle of some of what is so, so wrong with our schools. These works (to my mind anyway) substantiated within a shadow of a doubt the brokenness of contemporary school policies and the flawed neoliberal framings that brought them into being. But now what? The problems were well-established, my study would seek—if not solutions—the real and theoretical ground from which to imagine new ways forward. I had decided not to reproduce damaging stories, so I simply didn't recognize them<sup>35</sup>.*

*But as I sat to the side of Shawn Ginwright around a square-shaped configuration of tables in the psychology lounge at the GC, I began to hear in and around my research in new ways. Ginwright's talk was on "radical healing" a concept that he coined to raise up the integral role of healing work to social justice particularly in urban Black communities. He spoke about personal experiences that had prompted him to reframe his own views on love and healing and to value self- and community-care as work and as vital political action particularly in the context of communities impacted by the racialized traumas of injustice, oppression, and violence. And these concepts—about the individual*

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<sup>35</sup> I also wonder if "not seeing them" was self-protective, a way of staving off the scary territory of racial discourse, my (fucked up) sense of vulnerability in talking about something that I'm not a part of, or saying/ writing the wrong thing, outing myself as way less "woke" than I think I am.

*and community-level emotional repercussions of systemic oppression, about healing as work, and about the value of love, care and healing in social justice rang through me. Not six weeks out from major surgery on my (then) eight-month old daughter Sylvie's skull, the topic of healing, and the space to recognize the intensive work that I had been doing to care for myself and help us both heal through the trauma of her diagnosis and surgery had particular personal resonance. And listening to others around the room, I heard of the tolls of activist work and homophobic micro-aggressions, back pain and despair, of the physical and emotional illnesses sustained by an isolated Black professor working to support her students of color, immigration activists, the Executive Director of a youth development nonprofit in a low income urban neighborhood who had nighttime panic attacks. I heard the ItAG participants' words in those stories, their "depths of compassion and wells of fatigue" (Ginwright 2016, p. 11). I thought about this one session when Nisha was talking about coming home at the end of the school day, physically and emotionally drained--"my whole body hurts," she said—describing a nightly inability to speak or interact with roommates or friends, and the recognition around the room as others spoke in agreement. I thought about stories from Betty and Michelle about the burdens that the emotional stress of teaching had caused in their romantic relationships and friendships, about V confiding her exhaustion and recent diagnosis of ulcers to me. I thought of the number of times the teacher/ activists spoke of frequent crying at the end of the day. Phoebe said of her first year teaching, "It actually changed me. I found myself being more negative on a regular basis than positive, which is really not like me. Then having it affect other people, which really sucked." Lee shared a similar sentiment during our interview when she expressed reluctance to continue as a teacher (after more than 13 years in the field):*

*Because no puedo (I can't). I can't, and I want to [continue to teach] because of the passionate educator that I am, but then I don't want to turn into the cynical one. I don't want to turn into that cynical educator. I don't, but it's coming to the point where I have to step back and say hasta aqui (I can only manage up to this point). If I do stay here and I continue,*

*I'm going to turn into that cynical educator, and then to that person who wants to aspire to be an educator, I'll be like, 'Don't do it.' I don't want to be that person. I don't, because that is not who I am.*

*Lee, like Phoebe, talked about the way her work was changing her opinion of the profession and her general outlook, imposing a cynical persona that felt discomfiting and unfamiliar. Through the framework of radical healing and healing justice, I recognized the physical and emotional stresses these teacher/activists were experiencing that were largely tied to their labor. And I could re-see our work together the year prior in part as a healing process. When we sat around a table, breaking bread, speaking in turn about personal experiences, validating and supporting each other this also functioned as a kind of "healing circle" (Ginwright 2016); the personal reflective artworks as well as the collective activist art projects, were also acts of self- and community-care. The ItAG provided a safe and trusting environment for the teacher/activists to share experiences, frustrations, and through the imaginative space of our creative work, to cultivate hope in a moment of antagonistic public dialogue around teaching, and the stresses of a new, hastily implemented evaluation policy.*

*But the "healing justice" theory doubly resonated, for so much of the work the teachers depicted in our discussions and their images was also care and healing work with their own students. I could see that every day in big and small ways, through lesson plans, parent calls, classroom cleanup, and open awareness, they were engaged in the work of radical healing. And as I started to comb back through transcripts, drawings, and videos coding for care and healing justice, I saw that not only was the data chock-full of stories and images of care, but that much of this caring work was constructed around the social locations of their schools and students, around the very real experiences associated with phrases I had determined to avoid: at-risk, low-income, minority, over-age and under-credited, English language learner, urban. And not telling these stories, or in some way side-stepping the social and material risks of racism, poverty and violence behind the racialized social construction of "at*

*risk-ness,” exacts another form of damage. Desire-based research as Tuck affirms does not wipe away stories of hurt and harm, but rather tells a bigger, more complex, messier set of stories. Tuck (2009) reminds us that*

*De-pathologizing studies...resist all-too-easy, one-dimensional narratives of damage in order to expose ongoing structural inequity. Desire-based research frameworks, by contrast, can yield analyses that upend commonly held assumptions of responsibility, cohesiveness, ignorance, and paralysis within dispossessed and disenfranchised communities. Desire, yes, accounts for the loss and despair, but also the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities (p.417).*

*Thus, rather than fencing out the stigmatizing labels and concepts that contribute to the marginalization of communities of color, emerging bilinguals, and low-income communities—especially the students and families who are at once so present and distant in my study—I have come to see this work as a call to re-draw the borders, to widen the narrative space. My study (and my broader work as a white, economically privileged woman working with and around issues of inequality, white supremacy, and social justice) aims to tell a wider, thicker story.*

*Sometimes when I am feeling especially anxious, when my chest tightens and my breath won't reach my belly, I sit and imagine the feeling—its shape and color and texture and movement. Then I draw myself in my mind's eye, a round, fuzzy edged light form. And however big the feeling is, I make myself bigger so that my outlines extend beyond my body, spreading across the chair or floor or room. So that I am big enough to hold the feelings and more. In the way that I am learning to make space for my anxiety, to sit with my most repugnant emotions and contain the discomfort next to other stories about the backs of my thighs against the earth, about my strength and sensitivity, I am re-drawing the silhouette of the study. To tell stories big enough to contain and situate conditions of loss and despair, together with hope and wisdom and creativity. To make sense of the dynamics of*

*visuality (controlling images and discourses) alongside countervisualities which resist, disrupt, and re-imagine teachers and students and school communities.*

## CHAPTER 3

### **TEACHING WORK: GENDER, RACE, AND IN/VISIBILITY**

#### *introduction: the mismatch*

I remember my first glimpse of my own public reflection as an educator. Like when you catch sight of your likeness in a window on the sidewalk in the moments before you know it's you, the flash of seeing how you might look to the world. It was the early days of my relationship with Byron (now my husband) and we were living in San Francisco. He was completing pre-medical requirements at San Francisco State University and I had begun work at a nonprofit start-up designing and launching an education program focused on media, art and social justice. I remember the feeling of what DeVault (1990) has called "linguistic incongruence," not knowing how to name myself professionally. Not knowing how to encapsulate the work of designing curriculum, hanging exhibitions, hauling supplies in the trunk of my beat-up Subaru wagon, fundraising, facilitating, and building relationships with teachers and administrators into a single job title. Sometimes when I met new people I told them I was a teacher or that I worked for a global education nonprofit or that I ran an arts education program. Mostly I got responses like, "oh wow, that sounds like such fun!" Or smiles that seemed to say "isn't that cute?" as if I were planning the Junior League ice cream social (more on cultural ideas about women's volunteer work in Chapter Four). Meanwhile, Byron's medical aspirations were met with reverence: "What important work! What kind of medicine do you want to practice?" It was not that I hadn't known that educators and doctors were perceived differently in the abstract, that I didn't have a sense of the differentials in training, salary or prestige. But on the inside of our relationship, in the up-close view of work schedules, challenges and daily tasks, the images didn't line up. This was partly because Byron wasn't even doing anything doctorly yet—only taking organic chemistry classes and doing



research on mice. And also, my work in nonprofit education was so much more than I had imagined—more physical, more demanding, more intellectually rigorous. This was my first embodied whiff of the maddening gendered misrecognition of teaching work.

This feeling of having my work misunderstood and undervalued as an educator (and as a mother) has now become familiar, but no less maddening, to me personally. And it was a common refrain in my research with ten radical public high school teachers. When we checked in around the table, mapped our daily teaching practice, and planned for a participatory artwork, the teachers recounted story after story of mismatched collisions between the estimation of what teaching work is/ does/ entails and their own grounded experiences. They spoke of family members who couldn't grasp even after years that their workday never ends at 3pm, administrators who called for unpaid overtime in the name of "Danielson" (shorthand for the teacher evaluation policy), and friends who offered racistly-tinged admiration for the "bravery" of teaching in city public schools. They recounted a simultaneous over- and under-estimation of teacher labor, policies that alternately exaggerated and erased the distribution of teachers' blame and responsibility for students. As V shared one afternoon:

I feel like I've been encountering people responding to my response of, *I'm a teacher*, with a certain level of martyrdom, like *oh wow good for you!* And there's the right intention there for the most part, but it seems like people are really detached from the real work of a teacher. And yes, there is a level of truth to it, you do a lot of work that is not recognized, but it's also, I don't know. It makes me feel like, in that light, I'm not a normal human being. I'm like this teacher that wakes up early and tirelessly toils all day and all night.

Nisha responded:

And it's connected to this myth of the female teacher too. And I'm like, 'I don't like kids or crayons. Please!' (Laughing), and like, 'I'm not going to be a good mother to your children.'

This interchange and the public perception of teacher work as conflictually noble, natural, never-ending, and never-enough mirrors the expectations and sanctions placed on mothers and motherers. V's sense that "people are really detached from the real work of a teacher" conveys uneasiness with both the experience of being misrecognized and with the public perception of the teacher-martyr. When V says, "there's the right intention there for the most part," she acknowledges that while these responses valorize teaching, they also construct an image of the teacher that "wakes up early and tirelessly toils all day and all night." It is an image of the teacher as encumbered with a bottomless load of work and care, as someone that is "not that much of a normal human being." V seems to feel alienated by the imposition of this teacher identity, and she rejects the martyr designation. Meanwhile, Nisha's sarcastic renunciation of "kids and crayons" signals a rejection of her work as un-serious (calling on a well-worn cultural discourse that I challenge throughout the dissertation), drawing firm lines between the domestic responsibilities of mothers or early childhood educators and her own professional role as a secondary school teacher.

### *looking back: teaching as women's work*

The teacher participants took up and contested the language and imagery of motherhood in the context of a profession that is dominated by women and culturally associated with women's work.

The most recent statistics on public school teacher gender report that 58% of high school teachers, 72% of middle school teachers, and 89% of primary school teachers are women (Ingersoll, et al., 2014). This means that women comprise more than three quarters (76%) of the teaching labor force, a number that has grown by nearly 10% since 1981 (Ingersoll, et al., 2014). However,

gender disparities in the teaching profession, particularly in the early childhood and elementary grades, have prevailed for more than a century. Scholars (including Apple 1986; Biklen 1995; Goldstein 2014; Grumet 1988; Sklar 1973; Strober & Tyack 1980) link the feminization of teaching to historical processes of industrialization and locate the shift to the latter half of the 1800s, describing a confluence of political, economic, and cultural factors that led to both a demographic and ideological refashioning of teaching work. Strober and Tyack (1980) frame the dynamic in terms of “supply and demand.” The 19th century in the United States was a time of significant population growth stemming from significant waves of immigration. Widespread anxiety about the moral acculturation of working class and immigrant children to the American ethos resulted in the common schools movement, which provided free, compulsory schooling to larger and larger populations. These new student bodies required more teachers. Between 1850 and 1900 the total number of school teachers nearly doubled and, as a way to manage rising costs, districts hired cheaper teachers—women—paying them typically one half to one third of male teachers’ salaries (Apple 1986). Meanwhile, teaching became less attractive to men. Whereas men had once taught seasonally, often in combination with agricultural labor, a loss of autonomy, low salaries, and the introduction of accreditation requirements pushed men, who had other professional options, out of the field, thereby intensifying demand.

On the supply side, industrialization and urbanization meant that women’s and girls’ domestic labor had shifted. The industrial revolution transformed the country—largely in the space of one generation—from an agricultural system where women produced the majority of home goods like food and cloth, to a commercial and manufacturing economy. This pushed white girls and women out of the home. (Black women had long worked outside of the home, often as forced unpaid or

low-paid farm workers and domestic laborers.)<sup>36</sup> Women's professional options at the time were limited to domestic service, factory work in the textile mills, and teaching. Those who had the choice mainly opted for the the classroom—both as students and teachers.

Alongside the shifting political economic ground of industrialization, a concerted ideological campaign was being waged in favor of women as teachers. The movement, led by educator and activist Catharine Beecher and politician Horace Mann, among others, argued that as natural-born nurturers, women were ideally suited to teaching work. They fought vigorously to advance greater opportunities for women in education, while preserving the reigning “cult of domesticity.”

Their rationale twisted in on itself in a tangle of paradoxes—elevating and expanding women's capacities while tightly circumscribing their female teachers' range of motion. On the one hand they advocated for girls' and women's education, while on the other they positioned teaching as a “procession to marriage” (Strober and Tyack, 1980 p.496); they championed women's intellectual abilities as teachers while promoting the affordability of female labor and arguing against suffrage; they sang the praises of domestic labor and motherhood, while restricting women only to these aspirations; and they lauded the morality of women as necessary salve to the poor and immigrant common schoolchildren whom they labeled “ignorant, weak, and sinful.” Even as they helped to make more space for women in the public sphere, they held up an image of upper class white feminine morality that that was limiting and elusive to many if not most of those entering the labor force at the time. Mann paints a picture of this ideal educator:

As a teacher of schools... how divinely does she come, her head encircled  
with a halo of heavenly light, her feet sweetening the earth on which she  
treads, and the celestial radiance of her benignity making vice begin its

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<sup>36</sup> Throughout my dissertation, I have capitalized the racial/ cultural descriptors Black, Brown, Asian, and Latinx while printing “white” in lower case. This decision is an effort to raise up marginalized racial/ cultural groups while de-centering whiteness.

work of repentance through very envy of the beauty of virtue! (in

Goldstein 2014, p.27)

This vision of femininity and virtue was not available to large swaths of the female population—namely women of color, immigrants, and the poor. And for the white middle and upper middle class women who might have seen themselves in that image, it imposed an impossible (not to say repressive) standard of purity. This exemplar of pious womanhood did not originate with Mann, but he and his cohort helped extend the ideal into the classroom. The social discomfort with white women's presence in public life called for a reframing of school spaces and ideologies to look more like the home and the family. In order to construct white women as teachers and prove their capacity in this new market, reformers ideologically remodeled schools as semi-private, another kind of home space, where teachers served as moral mothers. Women teachers were expected to act as maternal figures for their pupils, both for the benefit of the young people's moral development and as their own form of preparation for matrimony and motherhood. As Beecher wrote, "The great purpose in a woman's life—the happy superintendence of a family—is accomplished all the better and easier by preliminary teaching in school. All the power she may develop here will come in use there" (in Grumet 1988, p.37). Thus teaching is conceived as a model, public demonstration, and training ground for family life and care.

Yet, as Grumet reminds us, the ideal of the caring teacher competed with calls for compliance and control. She contends:

The intimacy, spirituality, and innocence that teachers and students were to inherit from the mother/ child bond—the prototype of their relationship—collapsed into strategies of control. The ideal teacher was one who could control the children and be controlled by her superiors. (1988, p.43)

At the same time that women teachers were being held up as pure virtue—natural nurturers with the power to melt vice with the blink of a beautiful eye—they were being paid poverty wages and stripped of professional autonomy. Grumet explains this disjuncture between cultural values and material conditions by referencing Ann Douglas’s notion of “sentimentalism.” As Douglas writes:

Sentimentalism is a complex phenomenon. It asserts that the values a society’s activity denies are precisely the ones it cherishes; it attempts to deal with the phenomenon of cultural bifurcation by this manipulation of nostalgia. Sentimentalism provides a way to protest a power to which one has already in part capitulated. It is a form of dragging one’s heels.

(1977, p.12)

In this way, sentimentalism is a kind of recompense for stripping women of power in the domestic sphere, what Grumet calls a “vigorous, active motherhood” (1988, p.41) made impotent by industrialization. Society imposes sentimentalism onto women and domestic labor (in the home and school) as a space to work out cultural ambivalence about industrialization and changes to family life. Sentimental rhetoric is meant to make up for or at least soften the blow of low wages and the cultural devaluation of women’s work at home and in schools.

In contrast, Michael Apple offers a political economic theory for the devaluation of teaching work as a form of proletarianization, a process that Debord (1967) defines as “the extension of the logic of factory labor to a large sector of services and intellectual professions.” In schools, proletarianization or de-skilling looks like increasing controls placed on teacher time, the intensification of work requirements, and a narrowing of autonomous responsibility for the development of curriculum, standards, and assessments. While some of the changes taking place in 19th century schools—such as accreditation requirements and greater curricular control—can

be understood in terms of the significant expansion of the education system, they cannot be teased apart from questions and concepts of gender. As Apple explains, de-skilling cuts along gender lines:

In every occupational category, women are more likely to be proletarianized than men. This could be because of sexist practices of recruitment and promotion, the general tendency to care less about the conditions under which women labor, the way capital has historically colonized patriarchal relations, the historical relation between teaching and domesticity, and so on. (1986, p.33)

In this way, just as women's labor opportunities expanded into the educational sphere, the privileges, prestige and pay afforded to teachers contracted beneath their feet. Teaching came to be seen as semi-domestic, aligned with women's home and child caretaking responsibilities in part through the activism of figures like Mann and Beecher, and also because of the very fact that so many women were teaching. Women's presence in the classroom marked teaching as women's work—and because both women and their work were (and are) culturally devalued, their presence affirmed the low status of teaching labor. As Apple indicates, there were many reasons for the changing and limiting of teachers' roles, including those outlined above such as demographic shifts, industrialization, and the rapid growth of compulsory public schooling. However, each of these factors is linked in complex cause and effect relations with the racialized gender composition of the workforce and with the cultural meanings attached to femininity.

Year	Number of men	Number of women	Total number of teachers	Percentage of women
1870	-	-	-	59 (estimate)
1880	-	-	-	60 (estimate)
1890	121,877	232,925	354,802	65.6
1900	116,416	286,274	402,690	71.1
1910	91,591	389,952	481,543	81.0
1920	63,024	513,222	576,246	89.1
1930	67,239	573,718	640,957	89.5

Source: Adapted from Willard S. Elsbree, *The American Teacher*, (New York: American Book Co., 1939), p. 554, and Emery M. Foster, 'Statistical Summary of Education, 1929-30,' *Biennial Survey of Education 1928-1930, Vol. 2* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1932), p. 8.

Figure 6. Public Elementary School Teachers 1870-1930. (In Apple1986, p.60)

The feminization of teaching is woven with the history of public schooling in America. So, while teaching has not always been “women’s work,” public schools and female teachers came up together. The 19th century was a time of enormous growth and change in the United States in terms of population, labor, and social policy. Waves of immigration spurred by famine, unemployment and religious persecution (mostly from Europe but also from Asia and Latin America) led to massive population increases; the total population grew by approximately 30% each decade between 1800-1900). These new Americans settled primarily in industrial urban centers, contributing to a movement of urbanization. In 1840 the United States had only 131 cities, but by 1900 that number had risen to over 1,700.

The common schools movement, which transformed the rural one-room schoolhouse into the urban, compulsory, age-graded system we know today, was established largely in response to the



anxieties of assimilating “morally degraded and culturally offensive,” (Reese 2005, p.125) mostly non-white (by standards of the day) immigrant populations.<sup>37</sup> The other significant educational imperative was a form of training in obedience and acculturation to bureaucracy (Tyack 1974, p.49) that came directly from titans of industry who funded early free school movements and were themselves personally invested in training a new generation of laborers. Thus, the provision of public services and the broad shape of standardized public schooling were justified through a combination of racist, classist, and xenophobic claims along with a capitalist ethic funded substantially by industrialists.

These complex phenomena of immigration, industrialization and urbanization, the nuanced explanations of which far exceed the purview of this document, acted upon educational life and policy in the United States at precisely the moment when teaching came to be women’s work (see Figure 1 Apple 1986, adapted from Elsbree 1939<sup>38</sup>). While many historians have elaborated the central role of women in industrialization to the expansion of government schooling (Grumet 1988; Apple 1986; Strober & Tyack 1980; Biklen 1996; Acker 1989; Goldstein 2014), and another cohort of scholars have charted the raced, classed, and xenophobic drivers of the United States public school system in connection with immigration flows and urbanization (Brumberg 1986; Kaestle & Foner 1983; Reese 2005), few have linked these phenomena. Kumashiro provides a notable exception in taking up the colonial positioning of white women within early American public schools. As he writes:

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<sup>37</sup> Still, it bears noting that during this period many populations continued to be excluded from public education including African Americans, Chinese Americans, Mexican Americans, and the disabled, while Native Americans were forcibly removed from their communities and educated in boarding schools.

<sup>38</sup> Significant grassroots struggles shaped the provision of and access to public education for disenfranchised learners including girls, students of color, various immigrant communities, and children with disabilities. Protest and activism in the early formation of public schools, through the progressive movement, and ever-after, have played a vital role in forming and reforming the American education system.

In the 19th-century United States, the recruiting of young, un-married, white women into teaching echoed the ideology that pervaded imperial Britain, in which their role was to educate not only the white working class, but also Native people and people of color who were colonized by Britain or the United States. Public schooling, as embodied by the white woman teacher, played a central role in assimilating racially and culturally diverse groups throughout the history of U.S. growth, both its physical growth with Westward expansion and its demographic growth with increased immigration and forced incorporation via the conquest of native groups and enslavement of Africans. (2012, p.13)

Kumashiro locates social constructions of white femininity and colonial intentions at the ideological center of public schooling. As he asserts, the coincident trends of feminization and school expansion were not coincidental—the “natural morality” associated with white women was deployed as counterweight to the moral impurity of non-whites, immigrants, and poor children. This racist, xenophobic ideology joined with justifications outlined above including women’s affordability and presumed malleability and obedience. In the early segregated Black schools of post-reconstruction, Black female teachers, committed to the mission of “racial uplift,” played a parallel role in “civilizing” Black rural children. Writing of the gendered norms taken up and promoted by Black female teachers in rural segregated schools of the early 20th century, Luttrell (1997) explains that, having been “Exposed to the domestic-science movement as a way to promote the moral betterment of rural blacks, these teachers sought to correct black country ways, including speech, appearance, behavior, dress, and etiquette, which they viewed as impediments to social mobility not only within black communities but also within white society” (p.69). In this way, the standards of white female domesticity permeated the broad culture of schooling in the United States. These foundational tenets in the history of American public

education—the intersecting roles of capitalist interests, racist and xenophobic cultural anxieties, and sexism—continue to shape school discourses and policies. Examples include the disproportionate influence of private philanthro-capitalists (such as Zuckerberg, Broad, Gates), debates over curriculum and ethnic studies (as in Arizona House Bill 2281<sup>39</sup>), and the continued de-professionalization of a still largely female workforce, to name a few.

The formation of American public schools and the (female) public school teacher is a narrative of contradictions and incongruences—simultaneously a feminist victory and a constraint on available forms of femininity; a paternalistic workforce development program and a visionary social welfare initiative in the provision of free childcare and academic instruction; a space for meritocratic advancement (available to all) and classed sorting (in the unequal distribution of educational resources); both validation and denial of women’s domestic work. In order to understand the dynamics of contemporary public schools, and in the case of this study, teacher labor, we must take account of this fraught history.

### *contradictions and incongruences*

The contradictory values and circumstances that were baked into the institution of public schooling have played out in rules and social discourses imposed on female teachers. The image of the female public school teacher came into being as a mass of paradoxes and inconsistencies—soft and rigid, cheap and priceless, capable and child-like. Some of the many conflicting ideals and dynamics of 19th century teaching work are enumerated below. Teachers were expected/  
required/ assumed to be:

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<sup>39</sup> Arizona House Bill 2281 refers to a 2010 law that prohibited the teaching of ethnic studies or Mexican-American studies courses.

Morally pure	<i>but also</i>	Morally weak/ able to be controlled
Intellectually capable	<i>while</i>	Unqualified for leadership positions
Nurturing mother-types	<i>and also</i>	Strict disciplinarians
Required to control students	<i>and</i>	Required to be compliant with supervisors
Paid poorly	<i>yet</i>	Valued highly
Dedicated to the work	<i>while</i>	Training for marriage and motherhood

These paradoxes speak to sentimentalism and to the political economic tensions of industrialization. They reference the logics of capitalism, which spin any available rationale for economic efficiencies (read: exploitation and cost-cutting), and they construct an image of the female teacher as unattainable. Imagining a way into her work and emotional life is disorienting indeed—under-the-breath voices calling out distinct and opposite demands, paranoid talking-tos alongside occasional delusions of grandeur. How did teachers manage and make sense of these contradictory voices and rival pressures? Grumet explains it in terms of denial:

The feminization of teaching became a form of denial as the female teachers in the common schools demanded order in the name of sweetness, compelled moral rectitude in the name of recitation, citizenship in the name of silence, and asexuality in the name of manners. (1988, p.44)

This denial was personal, political, economic and social. It resided in social discourse, policies, and labor practices that both rhetorically magnified teachers' work and materially undercut it. Grumet uses the psychoanalytic frame of denial to express the competing institutional aims of feminization and to consider how such policies and practices were experienced emotionally in the bodies and brains of teachers called upon to live out these opposing directives in the name of morality, womanhood, and the children.

If we substitute some of the language—swap out “morality” for “role model” —and shift the concepts a bit (rather than “training for marriage and motherhood,” perhaps “training for more prestigious careers,” viz Teach For America), the spirit of these contradictory expectations continues to shape the way we think about, talk about, and make policy for teachers. As Grumet writes, despite all the changes that women have seen politically, professionally, and personally over the last 100-plus years:

Nevertheless, the contradictions that evolved in the nineteenth century between the doctrine of maternal love and the practice of harsh and regimented authority, between women’s dominance in numbers and our exclusion from leadership, between the overwhelming presence of women in classrooms and the continuing identification of men as the only persons with the capacity to know, are still present in the culture of schooling.

(1988, p.45)

These contradictions continue to give form to social goals, expectations, and biases that drive policy, practice, and ideology around teaching work.

#### INTO THE PRESENT:

*gender, teacher labor, and contemporary education policy*

Indeed, the expression of these incongruities and traces of the denial Grumet posits above, came through strongly in my work with ten public high school teachers—in V’s casting-off of the teacher-martyr archetype and Nisha’s mocking rejection of teaching as mothering—and countless other conversations, writings, and artworks. As Ingersoll et al.’s chart (Figure 7) illustrates, although the numbers of female high school teachers have grown substantially, the gender ratio of female to male educators overall and especially in the primary grades has remained surprisingly consistent since the figures Apple cites from 1920 (p. 7). Further, while women now comprise a larger

percentage of school principals (McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, Beck-Frazier, & Bruckner, 2009 report that in 1928 8% of secondary school principals and 55% of elementary school principals were women), men are disproportionately represented in leadership positions, confirming Strober & Tyack’s (1980) historical observation that “women teach and men manage.”

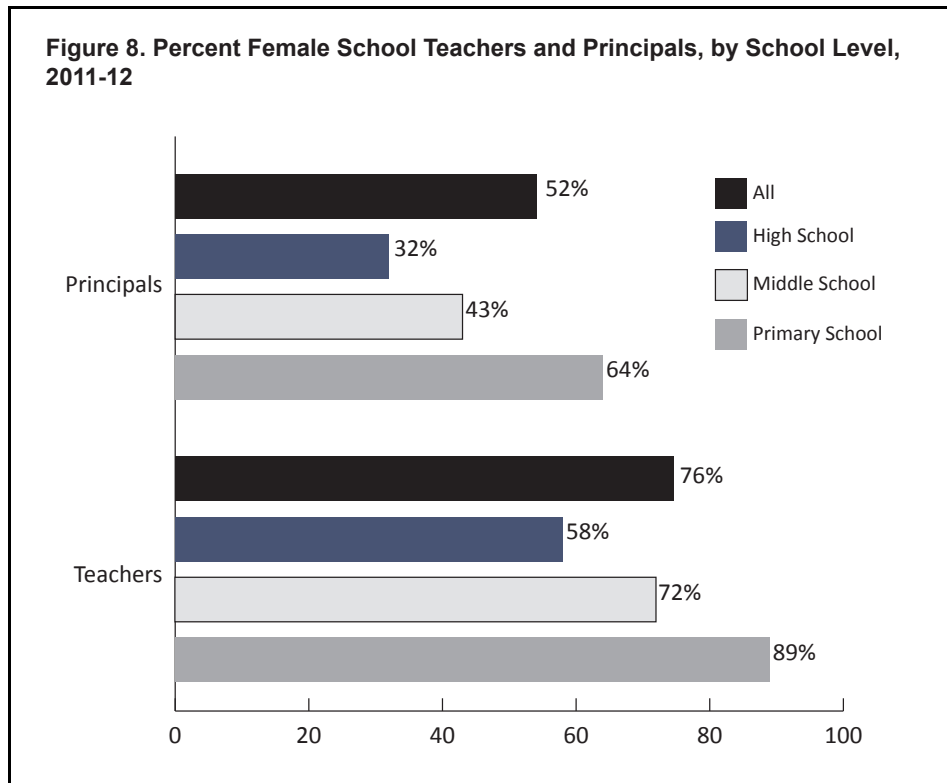


Figure 7. Percent female school teachers and principals. (In Ingersoll et al. 2014 p.16)

These gender statistics serve as backdrop to a time of heightened antagonism toward teachers in policy and popular media. Since the 1983 report, *A Nation At Risk*, sounded the alarm of a failing school system (the report famously declared, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war"), U.S. public education has been in a perceived state of crisis, with much of the blame directed at teachers. In *The Teacher Wars* (2014), Goldstein refers to the vitriol against teachers as “a moral panic,” part of a centuries-long pattern in which "policymakers and the media focus on a single class of people ... as emblems of a large,

complex social problem." The current panic has taken shape in a new generation of education policies—No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 2002; Race to the Top (RTTT) 2009; and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 2015—that enforce a regime of high-stakes, standardized testing as well as student and teacher data tracking systems and evaluation measures that link student scores with teacher tenure and compensation, designed to amplify school “accountability” (read: teacher culpability).



Figure 8. *Time Magazine* Covers. From left- December 2008; November 2014

These policies have emerged alongside a flurry of multimedia discourse about ineffective teachers, which as the *Time Magazine* covers suggest, portray “bad” teachers as “rotten apples,” or refuse that needs to be swept up and disposed of (the caption to Michelle Rhee’s no nonsense portrait in Figure 3—itsself a business-suited masculine twist on female domestic imagery—invokes her “battle against bad teachers.”) Goldstein remarks, “the ineffective tenured teacher has emerged as a feared character, a vampiric type who sucks tax dollars into her bloated pension and health care plans, without much regard for the children under her care.” Like the welfare queens of the 1980s (another feared, vampiric and not coincidentally female type as Luttrell

2013 demonstrates), the unionized teacher is socially constructed as the cause of school problems (which are ideologically linked through human capital theory with broader social and economic problems), and by this logic, “fixing” schools requires monitoring and disciplining the teaching force, while rooting out bad apples. On the flipside, another social script holds up the teacher as all-powerful hero with data (Darling-Hammond 1997, Hanushek 2010), films (*Freedom Writers* 2007; *School of Rock* 2003; *Waiting for Superman* 2010), and florid rhetoric (“At their best, teachers are everyday gods” Denby 2016) supplied as evidence of teachers’ transformative capacities. Ultimately, this honorific discourse erases social factors such as poverty and structural oppression, reinforcing the message of teachers’ neoliberal personal responsibility and outsized impact, while indirectly affirming the culpability of “bad teachers.”

#### *teacher labor in the literature*

Accountability policies and the social discourse of teacher blaming have been systematically deconstructed, critiqued, and countered by those on the progressive left— education scholars, journalists, and a growing community of social justice teacher activists. In academic literature, researchers have critiqued contemporary education policies for advancing corporate interests and neoliberal market logics (Fabricant & Fine 2012, 2013; Hursh 2016; Saltman 2007, 2010; Ball 2012; Ross & Gibson 2007); for the colorblind and ultimately racist/ classist/ xenophobic/ ableist ideologies they endorse (Leonardo 2009; Flores 2014; Connor et al. 2016); for exacerbating racial and economic inequality (Anyon 1997, 2005; Lipman 2011; Fontaine 2016; Hursh 2007); and for the narrowing, reductive impact of these policies on school curriculum (Au 2011; Meier et al. 2004; Ohanian 1999). Other education scholars have looked specifically at the impact of these policies and discourses on teachers—analyzing the de-professionalizing consequences on teacher work and critiquing the scripted, teacher-proof curricula that have accompanied recent policy initiatives (Giroux 2010, 2013; Apple 1986; Ohanian 1985); and



speaking back to destructive public discourse such as the tropes of teachers as lazy, incompetent, over-sexed, and spinsters (Goldstein 2014; Kumashiro 2012; Weber & Mitchell 1995). Referring to the wave of teacher praise that erupted in response to the 2012 school shootings at Sandyhook, Giroux countered:

What is repressed in these jarring historical moments is that teachers have been under vicious and sustained attack by right-wing conservatives, religious fundamentalists, and centrist democrats since the beginning of the 1980s. Depicted as the new “welfare queens,” their labor and their care has been instrumentalized and infantilized (Bessie, 2011); they have been fired en masse under calls for austerity; they have seen roll backs in their pensions, and have been derided because they teach in so-called “government schools.” Public school teachers too readily and far too pervasively have been relegated to zones of humiliation and denigration. (2013b, p.160)

Giroux articulates a forceful analysis of contemporary education policy as “instrumentalizing and infantilizing” teacher labor, as he calls out and criticizes blameful media rhetoric. However, his analysis leaves out a gendered reading of these dynamics (despite the gendered reference to teachers as “welfare queens.” Instead, he explains the dual phenomena of de-skilling and teacher blaming in terms of neoliberal logics and the “insistence that all aspects of social life be determined, shaped, and weighted through market-driven measures” (2013a p.2). He positions negative teacher discourse in opposition to corporate reforms, largely funded by wealthy billionaires, “that promote privatization, de-professionalization, online classes, and high-stakes testing.” And goes on to explain that “public school teachers have become the new class of government dependent moochers, and the disparaged culture of Wall Street has emerged as the only model or resource from which to develop theories of educational leadership and reform.”

Giroux's calculation—that the two sides of a neoliberal coin at once promoting self-reliance and disdain for public services are responsible for the current antipathy towards teachers—echoes a popular progressive discourse about the plight of unionism and social welfare in neoliberal times. By Giroux's telling, this moment of "moral panic" is owed to teachers' insistence on labor protections and their affiliation with one of the largest social welfare programs in the country—schools—facts which position them as adversaries to the gospels of Wall Street competition, efficiency, and ethos of accumulation. Giroux offers a sophisticated breakdown of the contemporary political, economic and discursive circumstances facing teachers today. However, any mention of gender—the overwhelmingly female composition of the labor force, the denigration or invisibility of teachers' nurturing and care as women's work, or the greater likelihood of proletarianization in female dominated professions—is notably absent.

Like Giroux, Kumashiro decodes the hidden curriculum of popular education policy initiatives in *Bad teacher! How teacher blaming distorts the bigger picture* (2012). In a Berkeley lecture on the publication (2012), he explains the deeper meaning behind the rhyming triplet of "Longer day, merit pay, and data display," (p.8) and how current attacks on teachers serve to conceal "the bigger problems in education." Kumashiro demonstrates how each of these popular reforms—against the logics of elite schooling practices, evidence-based research, and common sense—responds to an implied assertion that teachers are lazy, incompetent and "simply not trying hard enough" (p.9). And like Giroux, Kumashiro also explains this pattern in terms of the raced and classed rationalities of neoliberalism - principles of competition and choice that create, "two routes for teachers," (alternative certification vs. traditional and incentives that match the least experienced/ qualified teachers with the least white, least economically stable students) and ultimately exacerbate race and class inequality for students. Kumashiro does important work in this analysis by disentangling the political spectacle of education policy from the underlying

motivations and real world outcomes yet, again, he excludes gender from his frame of study. While at the start of the text, he outlines the persistent shaping role of white women in the formation of a colonial model of public education (p.14), his gendered analysis ends there<sup>40</sup>. He does not factor gender into why or in what ways teachers are cast as “bad,” or why their efforts and long hours don’t count in the public imagination as work. Giroux and Kumashiro’s analyses are representative of current critical scholarship that emphasizes neoliberal and racialized readings of education policy to the exclusion of gender. Whereas the historical and contemporary gendered conditions of teacher labor were widely explored by second wave scholars of the 1980s (Grumet 1988; Acker 1989; Biklen 1995; Weiler 1988; Apple 1986; Strober & Lanford 1986; Tyack & Hansot 1982; Strober & Tyack 1980, etc.), this analytical lens has largely faded from view since the turn of the 21st century and the advent of new intensified education policies<sup>41</sup>.

*absences + equations: analyzing teacher activist discourses*

Looking beyond the scope of academic literature, I was interested in how the gendered analysis of teaching is being addressed by teacher activist organizations, like the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE), a group to which I have belonged since 2007, and which coordinates the Inquiry to Action Groups (ItAGs) that served as the site for my dissertation research. The founding of NYCoRE in 2003 coincides with a grassroots movement of volunteer social justice teacher groups that continues up through the present. Some of these organizations are small and local, designed around face-to-face meetings and community activism, while others post online memberships of 57,000-plus (Badass Teachers Facebook page), and concentrate on online organizing tactics such as targeted twitter campaigns, and aggregating and distributing

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<sup>40</sup> Admittedly, an analysis of teacher labor is tangential to the central theme of his book, which is mostly concerned with deconstructing education policies and their real world impacts on students, particularly poor students and students of color.

<sup>41</sup> Notable exceptions include: Weiner (2002), Goldstein (2014), Aldridge & Christensen (2013), and others.

relevant media. There are at least two national coalitions—the Education for Liberation Network that hosts the annual, “Free Minds, Free People” conference, and the Teacher Activist Groups (TAG), a coalition of eleven local organizations with a national platform focused on issues including critical pedagogy, democratic school governance, and assessment reform. Lastly, there is a cohort of groups that have grown out of progressive union caucuses in cities like Milwaukee (Educators Network for Social Justice- ENSJ), Chicago (Caucus for Rank and File Educators- CORE), and New York (Movement of Rank and File Educators- MORE) that have marshaled reform efforts through union channels. Writing of this trend in social justice activism, Picower notes:

Organizations in TAG, along with other educational justice groups, work to engage teachers in political education and action around issues such as privatization, neoliberalism, military recruitment, high-stakes-testing, racism, and homophobia. They do this work through an array of strategies including, but not limited to, conferences, study groups, protests, rallies, curriculum fairs, and collaboration with other stakeholders. (2012, p.561)

The variable size, volunteer membership and leadership structures, and range of state and regional educational policies and priorities mean that the aims and tactics of these groups differ substantially. Efforts and initiatives often shift in response to school policies, funding, and changes in the membership. Some of the groups (CORE, MORE, ENSJ) look to effect policy change through union organizing, while others focus on classroom practice through progressive teacher professional development (PEM, EdLib, TSJ). Some work to shape popular opinion through public-facing activist media (BAT, TAG Philly), while others combine a variety of these tools and strategies. For example, NYCORE, in addition to organizing the ItAGs, runs a social justice professional development program for new teachers (New Teacher Underground), hosts monthly teacher meetings, organizes a bi-annual conference, manages an active listserv, produces a yearly social justice plan book (in collaboration with EdLib), writes curriculum, coordinates teacher

affinity groups (Educators of color, NYQueer, TeachDream- to support undocumented youth) and participates in ad-hoc protests. Organizations like NYCoRE have grown substantially in membership and influence with the rise of blogging, image-sharing, and video-sharing social media tools for organizing. These organizations are further bolstered by national bi-partisan resistance to the Common Core State Standards and the “Opt-Out” movement in which parents, students, and, in some cases, teachers, refuse to participate in standardized testing. The Opt-Out movement has inspired another cohort of activist organizations that overlap and, in some cases, collaborate with the teacher groups.

I wanted to know how NYCoRE and its cohort engaged questions of teacher labor in terms of gender or ideas about women’s work. To find out I identified thirteen teacher activist organizations through resources pages, lists of “allies” from organizations I knew, and by referencing the limited literature on the subject (Doster 2008; Picower 2012; Levine & Au 2013). Using texts available on the groups’ websites, I focused on each organization’s goals as expressed in mission/ vision statements, policy platforms, or “points of unity.” I coded these texts for the most prevalent ideas, those that were shared by at least two groups, and organized them around common themes, mapping their frequency across a table (Table 5 is an excerpt of this chart). In this way, MORE’s affirmation to “Support the opt-out movement and oppose high stakes testing which disproportionately harms special ed and ESL students” joins with NYCoRE’s: “We oppose high stakes standardized testing because it is a tool of corporatization, stratification, and social reproduction...We support creative approaches to develop local, holistic assessments that provide more insight than a one-size-fits-all exam,” and others under the heading, “Assessment reform for teachers + students.” Ten themes emerged from this analysis:

1. Assessment reform for teachers + students
2. Community justice (economic/ racial)
3. Critical, culturally-relevant pedagogy
4. Democratic school and union governance
5. Fully funded public education (against charters, privatization, and neoliberalism)
6. Justice + equality (economic, language, racial, dis/ability) within the public school system
7. Safe school environment for all (anti-bullying/ anti-oppressive/ anti-racist)
8. School discipline reform (against racialized disciplinary policies/ in favor of restorative justice)
9. Social Justice/ progressive professional development
10. Teacher and/or student activism

The teacher group texts represent a complex analysis of the problems concerning public education and possible solutions, not adequately represented by my abbreviated themes. For example, Metro Atlantans for Public Schools (MAPS) declares that they stand for “Fully funded public schools which truly leave no child behind rather than our underfunded and understaffed schools which all too often fail to address the needs of children of color, impoverished students, English Language Learners, and those who are facing various physical, mental, and emotional challenges which may result in their being pushed out of our schools and into the juvenile justice system.” This layered phrasing advocates for “fully funded public schools,” a concept which addresses both the inequality of resources across institutions (by race and class) as well as denouncing public/private models of education funding (charters, educational technology, or private grants); it hints at the intensification of teacher labor, referring to schools that are “underfunded and understaffed”; it denounces NCLB calling out the groups—English Language

Learners, students of color, and students with disabilities—that were targeted for support by the 2002 policy but have in fact fallen further behind; and it links NCLB to school push-outs and the School-to-Prison-Pipeline. This MAPS excerpt indicates familiarity with education policies and funding dynamics and an analysis of their intersecting impacts on schools and students. As a whole, the teacher activist statements communicate a sophisticated critique of education policy, popular reform efforts, and the social dynamics that shape present circumstances. The most prevalent views advocate for racial and economic justice in society (#2) and schools (#6) (linking community conditions to school conditions); anti-racist and anti-oppressive school environments (#7) and curriculum (#3); and the democratic governance of schools and teachers unions (#4), a position that addresses both the politics of school governance in times of mayoral control and the importance of teacher’s labor rights through union organizing. This progressive vision for public schools is consistent with popular academic discourses that critique privatization and neoliberal market-based reforms for perpetuating and deepening race and class inequality (e.g., Giroux 2013; Kumashiro 2012; Ball 2012; Fabricant & Fine 2012; Lipman 2011; Saltman 2007).

Table 5. Activist teacher groups, themes and patterns

GROUPS	Assessment reform	Community Justice (econ. + racial)	Critical, culturally-relevant pedagogy	Democratic school/ union gov.	Fully funded Public ed.	Racial/ econ. school equality	Safe schools	School discipline reform	Social Justice PD	Teacher/ student activism
NYCoRE New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYC)										
PEM The People's Education Movement (LA)										
TAG Teacher Activist Groups (National)										
TSJ Teachers for Social Justice (Chicago)										
T4SJ Teachers for Social Justice (Bay Area)										
TU Teachers Unite (NYC)										

Teachers are clearly part of this vision, in their curriculum, activism, and advocacy on behalf of students and particularly low-income youth of color. However, as I read through the group platforms, it seemed that students were more centrally positioned. When I reviewed the texts, I saw that much of the language frames school issues as student issues. For example, TAG envisions a “School Climate that *Empowers and Liberates Students.*” TSJ commits to “Mobilize teachers as a force in solidarity with students, parents, and community members *to fight for educational justice and other issues that impact children and youth.*” BAT supports “*Student driven policies and systems that are equitably funded to meet the needs of the students and schools.*” As my italics indicate, this language organizes school reform around student needs, student liberation, and student-driven policies, as it de-centers and perhaps marginalizes the voices, needs, and experiences of teachers. What about a school climate that empowers and liberates students and teachers, or



student- and educator-driven policies? Where do these progressive teachers fit in their own imagination of better public schools?

I conducted another analysis of the same mission/ vision and policy platform texts, this time searching for the terms “teachers/ teaching,” and “educators/ educating.” Studying the fraction of statements that reference teachers, I found that about half enumerated a vision for teacher rights and benefits, while the other half described what I call “teacher shoulds.” One group, MORE, lays out a 2016 platform under the mantle “Our Working Conditions are Our Students’ Learning Conditions.” An outlier among the groups for their direct focus on teacher labor issues such as parental leave, due process rights for untenured educators, and teacher voice in shaping professional development, MORE offers the most forceful example of the “teacher rights” discourse. Badass Teachers, an organizational name that announces its “defiant [and] in-your-face” pro-teacher stance (Naison 2014) also takes an assertive tone, framing their platform as “demands.” And the Teacher Activist Groups offer a common refrain, stating, “TAG believes teachers have the right to organize to protect their rights as professionals and workers” voicing support for labor protections and unions.

In contrast, the “teacher shoulds” lay out ethical guidelines and rules of conduct made by teachers for teachers. Several groups refer to educators’ responsibilities. For example, Teachers for Social Justice (Chicago) writes, “We believe it is our ethical responsibility as educators to: Develop our understanding of the sociopolitical, historical, cultural, and economic roots of social inequality and injustice, and recognize the role of education within this context,” followed by a list of five other responsibilities including “liberatory” curriculum development, and promoting teacher activism. NYCORE shares similar sentiments: “As educators we have a responsibility to address the ways in which these forms of oppression [racism and neoliberalism] function in solidarity with our students,

their families, and the broader communities with which we work.” These statements and others outline teachers’ political commitments and sense of collaborative investment in education reform, while acknowledging power imbalances between teachers and students and the race/ class dynamics of a mostly white labor force and mostly Brown student population. Does this language signal another layer of unrecognized labor that teachers of color (and anti-racist educators) must take on in educating their colleagues? Or perhaps they also function as a form of subtle admonition to the “bad teachers” (defined outside of the neoliberal depiction), a way of separating themselves as activists from the less ‘woke’ pack? I also wonder if a new or veteran teacher reading this list might feel overwhelmed. Despite the critical importance of this engaged, reflective work, does it amount to another pile of uncompensated labor on top of the already intensified burdens of teacher work under neoliberalism? While the “teacher rights” discourse outlines excessive/ unrecognized/ uncompensated forms of extant teacher labor, the “teacher shoulds” imply an additional set of responsibilities.

Finally, I scanned the texts for a gendered analysis of school dynamics and teacher work. Searching for the words “gender/ woman/ women/ girl/ female/ sexism/ feminism” turned up very little in the way of substantive usage. Most allusions to gender refer to students and appear laundry-list-style where gender is one among many identity markers, as in BAT’s demand for “Excellent public education for all students, regardless of economic status, race, nationality, gender, religion, or sexual orientation.” The only meaningful discussions of gender are NYCoRE’s internal anti-sexist policy and their insistence that schools be safe spaces for “women/girls, gender nonconforming, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning [people],” although this is focused on students as opposed to teachers. Their final point of unity reads, “In order to combat economic, social, and political systems that actively silence People of Color (PoC) and women, NYCoRE is committed to being an anti-racist, anti-sexist organization. We maintain a

majority of women and People of Color representation in our leadership and strive to do the same in our membership.” Here NYCoRE acknowledges the structural sexism (along with racism) that pervades social institutions and describes their own method of combating it by maintaining a majority female (and PoC) leadership team and membership base.<sup>42</sup> Yet, while NYCoRE—only one of the 13 groups—calls out and works to address institutional sexism internally, they offer no broader analysis of gender or sexism in reference to the 76% female teacher labor force.

I’m not sure why organizations founded and run by teachers do not direct more analytical or activist energy towards their own working conditions at a time when, by all accounts, the working conditions of teachers have dramatically deteriorated (Apple 1986; Ballet et al. 2006). Or that, alongside sophisticated deconstructions of neoliberal education policies and racial inequities, these groups offer no gendered analysis of teacher labor, or discursive space for feminist solidarity. In fact, the word “feminism” is not once referred to in any of the texts. These findings—the undersized discussion of teacher labor, and near absent attention to gender and sexism (with regard to teachers)—among the teacher activist platforms resonated with my experience in NYCoRE over the years, where organizational offerings and dialogues were mainly oriented towards a racial capitalist analysis of education policy and focused on supporting student populations disproportionately harmed by such policies, such as low income youth, youth of color, queer youth, and undocumented youth. It also resonated with my own long-held beliefs about education—a hard-to-put-my-finger-on, deep-in-my-gut sense about what matters most in social justice and education reform. If these ideas were to be expressed in a mathematical configuration, they might look like:

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<sup>42</sup> While NYCoRE maintains a majority female, majority PoC leadership team, the same is not true of its members (since membership is open to all and loosely defined, this is difficult to effect). Members are mostly female and majority white (Mayorga, personal conversation 2014).

Student needs > Teacher needs

Racial capitalist analysis > Gendered analysis

Reading and reflecting on these gaps in the academic literature, teacher activist discourse, and my own internalized analysis, I offer several theories about the equations and absences.

## **POST-FEMINISM, NEOLIBERALISM, AND NITPICKING**

I think we can understand the lack of attention to teacher labor concerns and gendered breakdown in terms of an overlapping series of analytical frames centered around “post-feminism,” the notion that the aims of the second-wave have been achieved, and as McRobbie writes, “‘things have changed’, so feminism is now irrelevant.” Like the conception of a “post-racial” or colorblind society, post-feminism leverages the de-contextualized (by race and class) and exceptional gains of successful women—“top girls” as McRobbie calls them (2007)—to announce the end of institutional sexism and any need for feminist activism or ideas. Post-feminism forecloses on gendered discourse by framing it as unnecessary, and those who insist on ongoing gendered inequality as unsuccessful or opportunistic complainers (playing the “woman card”). Writing about the marginalization of gender equity in school reform discourse, Weiner uses the metaphor of nitpicking. She explains:

*Nitpicking* is a common figure of speech used to describe a preoccupation with some tiny, peripheral matter. I use this meaning of *nitpicking* as a metaphor for the way gender equity has been configured in school reform in the past decade, as an issue that is tangential. Used figuratively, *nitpicking* connotes that one has lost sight of the most important issue and focused instead on something incidental or trivial. In using *nitpicking* as a metaphor for the marginalization of concerns about gender equality, I suggest that men’s and women’s equality has dropped from the radar of

educational policy almost to the point that it is invisible as an issue in urban schools deserving public attention. Hence, those who draw attention to gender equity in urban school reform are assumed to be missing the “big picture.” (2002 p.364)

Weiner’s metaphor, and the positioning of gender as peripheral to education policy and teacher labor, props up the post-feminist assertion that gender equity in schools (and society as a whole) has already been achieved. But it’s an old argument too—that gender issues are narrow and particular, less pressing or widely applicable than class or race-based frames of study. By this line of reasoning, concern about any remnants of school sexism or misogyny, misses the point and, furthermore, diverts attention away from the “real” problems in education. Weiner’s language of nitpicking also draws aptly on gendered work—picking lice out of a child’s hair—and stereotypes of the nagging female (wife, mother, teacher, etc.). These social scripts work to deter (perhaps unconsciously) teacher activists’ and education scholars’ engagement with issues of gender.

The ideas of post-feminism are woven with several strands of neoliberal ideology. As Fraser suggests, neoliberalism has co-opted second-wave struggles such as “the family wage” to advance market culture and practices of “flexible capitalism<sup>43</sup>.” Furthermore, post-feminism works to affirm the notion of neoliberal meritocracy by highlighting exemplars of individual success as a means to promote free-market rationalities and public disinvestment. As the neoliberal argument goes, achievement within a free-market capitalist model is accomplished through hard work, and

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<sup>43</sup> The term, “flexible capitalism,” was coined by Richard Sennett (2000; and cited by Fraser 2013) to describe contemporary economic conditions. Flexible capitalism refers to both the aims of companies that are meant to work malleably in pursuit of capital, and to citizen/ workers. As Sennett writes (2000, p.9), “Workers are asked to behave nimbly, to be open to change on short notice, to take risks continually, to become ever less dependant on regulations and formal procedures.” The notion of flexible capitalism has particular resonance for women who are seen to require flexibility in managing work and family life and are also expected to be especially flexible.

is available to all (regardless of race, class, or gender) without the aids of state intervention or social welfare. Ringrose (2007) explores the post-feminist binary of female success/ male failure within contemporary schools. She argues that the “mythology” around girls’ school success and boys’ failure—the latter a decades-long topic of international frenzy—is a product of new data and testing regimes (which narrowly define student achievement) that ignore socio-cultural factors of race and class, and have been greatly exaggerated by the media. Turning her analytical attention to girls’ school achievement, Ringrose understands this narrative as a post-feminist symbol for meritocratic neoliberal attainment. As she explains, in the discourse of successful schoolgirls,

We find a story that implies it is possible to win and be successful in the shifting global economy, and girls and feminine subjects, because of their flexibility, adaptability and hard work in spheres of education and work are the prototypes for this success. This radically decontextualized, success-based discourse represents a solidification of neoliberal preoccupation with individualizing logics that inculcate youth to continually re-adapt and reinvent themselves to the shifting conditions of globalization. This is the ‘free market feminism’ described by McRobbie (2004), where girls have become the new poster boy for neoliberal dreams of winning, and ‘just doing it’ against the odds.

In this way, the social construction of school as a site for girls’ success and gender equality leverages an individualizing script of female achievement as evidence of access and meritocratic attainment. Significantly, this post-feminist storyline works beyond gender to justify the neoliberal “pull yourself up by your schoolstraps,” (Leonardo 2007) ethic of personal responsibility, success, and public disinvestment.

These interlocking ideologies shape the scarcity of academic scholarship and teacher activist discourse on the gendered dimensions of teaching policies and teacher labor. Post-feminism joined with neoliberalism brands gender inequality a non-issue, launching narratives of (de-contextualized) female success as proof. And school is discursively constructed as a female space, dominated by female teachers, where girls outdo their male classmates. Feminists who reject the “post” designation are marked as nitpickers— nagging and irrelevant. These theoretical frames, together with the novelty of educational neoliberalism (as opposed to school patriarchy which has long been in place and was well-described by the second wave), have shifted progressive educational scholarship towards a racial-capitalist framework and away from gender inequality.

In the case of the teacher activist discourses, the explanation may be somewhat more complex. For majority female teacher activist groups the determination of their organizational priorities is political and personal. In developing their group missions, vision statements, and activist agendas, they are also dividing limited time and resources (particularly for volunteer-run organizations, led primarily by full-time teachers) among a long list of social and educational concerns. That most of the groups focus disproportionate attention on student needs as opposed to their own teacher needs reflects both the post-feminist, neoliberal moment and, perhaps, also their gendered social positioning as caregivers. As James affirms, the caring role of teachers is constructed and internalized as self-sacrificing. In her study of six female teachers at a low-income suburban elementary school, the women expressed their own gendered teacher identities in terms of mothering and a selfless conception of care in relation to the overwhelming needs of their mostly poor, Latinx<sup>44</sup> students.

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<sup>44</sup> “Latinx” is a relatively new word meant to designate Latinidad outside of the gender binaries of Latina/ Latino/ Latin@.

Sacrificing self for others is a crucial aspect of these women's efforts to become the teachers they aspire to be. In making their own needs dependent on fulfilling the needs of others, however, it appears they accomplish two things: first, they make it so that their happiness and fulfillment rests in the hands of others (namely students, whose wealth of needs cannot possibly be met by a single teacher); and second, they negate any needs of their own that lie outside the roles they assign themselves as teachers. Internalizing and enacting this dominant construct of care, in which caring for students demands 'engrossment' and 'selflessness', ultimately means teachers are less able to care for themselves. (2010, p.530)

In these terms care, a topic I take up extensively in Chapters Four and Six, requires teachers to suppress and deny their own needs. As James found through her research, women who veered from this script were sanctioned and ostracized by colleagues for being selfish.

The social storyline that positions educators as all-powerful fixers of urban poverty ties into racist assumptions about the inadequacy of poor non-white families to care for their own and places great burdens on the shoulders of caring teachers working in communities facing intersectional social oppression. I wonder if this neoliberal frame encourages teachers and teacher activist groups to see their labor as solitary, as opposed to a collective effort together with families, communities, social services and governments. In turn, does this mean that teachers may be more likely to see their work as individual or accept personal blame for failures (and responsibility for successes) rather than seeking broader social explanations? All this is to say, teacher activists' disproportionate focus on student needs and the injustices students confront, above their own labor concerns and structural gendered analysis, is consistent with teachers' social positioning as caring



and selfless. In addition to the forces of post-feminist, neoliberal rhetoric, the teacher-activist discourses reflect and reinforce social raced and classed ideas about teachers' power to save poor children, and the gendered attributes associated with this necessarily impossible task.

## **MAPPING MY OWN DIS/ADVANTAGE**

I am convinced of the power of the post-feminist blinders to shape discourse in part through the story of my own extreme makeover. I came of age in a deeply and as yet un-self-consciously post-feminist moment. My rabbi was a lesbian, the dean of my high school was a woman, my mother made as much money as my father, I knew only one stay-at-home-mom who had moved to Brooklyn from the suburbs. My own mom woke early each morning and, after step aerobics class, donned an '80s power suit, red lipstick, and with heels in her briefcase, got on the 2/3 train to Wall Street. Her success in a formerly male-dominated profession (finance) was part of the congratulatory tale told and retold by my family, progressive private school, and broader popular culture. My two full-time working parents' solution to my and my brother's needs for care included three long-term Caribbean nannies whose own stories are hidden by the congratulatory telling.

I began to reckon with my white privilege in high school, although I did not yet know that term. The balance of friends and colors at my small school shifted between 8th and 9th grades and my own circle of friends got considerably whiter as the class became more diverse. I sat for many afternoons with another white, economically-privileged friend in the office of our school's head of diversity trying to work out the mismatch between the official celebratory messaging of the school (diversity, lalalala!!) and what seemed to be unraveling among our friend group. I saw in small, clear spurts that year that my operating assumptions about New York, the neighborhood, our

school, my family, myself as exceptional—special preserves from racist and oppressive ideologies—were faulty.

It took me many more years to come into perceiving gender inequality. I knew it was there, I knew about statistics on sexual violence and that women's wages were 70 cents for every dollar earned by men, but again, I imagined myself in a progressive bubble, where these dynamics did not apply. And because I could not see them (or rather didn't have the words or frames to recognize them), I did not quite believe them either. I took my first course in anything like women's studies (*Feminism in Education*) in graduate school (at the age of 33) and only then because my advisor was teaching it. Up until the moment of this course, I didn't know much about feminism and I didn't really want to. I saw feminism as white (I had no understanding of intersectionality or Black Feminism) and whiny and somewhat passé. But during that semester, somewhere in the pages of Bartky's (1990) *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*, in her investigation of "how the values of a system that oppresses us [femininity] are able to take up residence in our minds," (p.2) and the interplay of her relational and political economic frames of analysis, my head split open. I remember reading in a coffee shop, and through Bartky's words re-seeing, not only my present circumstances, life, and relationships, but also going back over all these moments and histories and evaluating them against new criteria. I had never named my mom's second shift or my own emotional labor. The readings and discussions sparked by this course gave me words and frames for ways I think and feel and teach, things I love, am good at, feel diminished by, and value. But reconciling these new lenses was challenging and I didn't quite

know how to hold the sense of my own outrage alongside my significant (race and class) privileges and in the context of so many other (greater?<sup>45</sup>) injustices.

I raise this reflective account because it is part of what makes the tangle of post-feminist, neoliberal blinders believable to me. My personal telling is also an expression of empathy with the tricky territory of mapping advantage and disadvantage in school geographies—tacking between teachers' white racial (82%) privilege and female gender (76%) oppression in the context of teachers' authoritative power relative to students, and the many deep injustices of our school system (which teachers also sometimes perpetrate). Second wave feminism famously fell short of this negotiation and Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality (1989) as part of a movement of Black and Multiracial Feminism, is a vital corrective to the de-contextualized, binary conception of gender put forth by white second-wavers. Intersectionality is typically taken up to consider overlapping forms of oppression—race, gender, sexuality, etc. But I think it (meaning intersectionality) might also serve as a template for addressing the crisscrossing space of privilege and oppression that teachers (and white women in general) occupy. How can the lens of intersectionality help map the uneven terrain of white privilege and misogyny, the powers of age and authority that teachers hold in their classrooms alongside their lack of power in administrative contexts, over education policy, or in the broader culture?

If we want to understand the contemporary experiences of teachers and the social forces that shape teacher work, value, and evaluation, we must unravel the raced, classed, and gendered dynamics that established teaching as a field dominated by women and how it came to be seen

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<sup>45</sup> I keep coming back to this parenthesized question mark. What is this (my/ society's) impetus to rank order oppressions? And yet, it also (through the lens of intersectionality as I take it up) seems important to say that all oppressions are not equal. And that in the real world, where time and energy is limited, teacher-activists' attention to those most gravely impacted by social/ educational policies has merit.

as “women’s work.” Holding these origin stories in mind, and the uneven geographies of “intersectional” privilege and oppression that shape teacher work, my study shines a light on the missing discourse of gender—teaching as “women’s work” within current critiques of education that focus more on the reproduction of racial capitalism and the making of neoliberal subjects. Thirty years later, in the context of NCLB, RTTP, Advance and a new regime of data-driven accountability, my study re-asks Grumet’s (1988) essential question: *How do teachers hold the contradictory expectations placed on them by policy and social discourse?* Grumet answers her own query through the psychoanalytic lens of denial. My study explains it as invisible and devalued work.

## CHAPTER 4

### **“WORK IN A GENEROUS SENSE”: LOCATING INVISIBLE CAREWORK**

The thing about denial (as Grumet frames it) is that it produces invisibility. When, in casual conversation, a friend denies a teacher’s long hours or the state legislates policy that denies measures of student learning other than those found on standardized tests, “the real work of teaching,” as V calls it, goes unseen. This chapter outlines an intersectional feminist analysis of “women’s work” through art and theory around the interlocking subjects of care and “invisible work.” In the following pages, I join sociological and scholarly analysis with visual study to draw out the links between social visibility and value in teacher labor.

#### *invisible labor + “the real work of teaching”*

Invisible work was a through-line in the dialogue, artwork, and interviews that I conducted with ten radical public high school teachers. It came through in “teacher talk” about prepping for principal walk-throughs, relationships with partners, and policy analysis—as a frequent subtext of our formal and informal discussions. We addressed it directly too. One day we began our workshop by going around the room with the prompt, “what kind of invisible work did you do this week?” On another day we invited participants to post invisible work images to VoiceThread, a social media platform that we utilized to share and annotate images between our in-person sessions. We asked teachers, “What do you do in a day that never gets seen or recognized? Create or capture an image of this invisible work and post it online.”

Without prepared readings or academic references, the concept of invisible work was immediately intelligible to the teachers. They talked about preparing lessons for a substitute

teacher while out on jury duty, about identifying and seeking help for a suicidal student, about the “lunchtime crew” of kids who hang out in their classrooms during lunch hour. They talked about work with colleagues and teams that met, often for hours each day, to coordinate curriculum and strategize about particular students. Some of their images included a cluttered desk during after-school work hours, a hallway bulletin board, a “nail [painting] party” with students, and a digital drawing of a teacher working to capture the playfully depicted floating ears of her class.

### *visibility + value*

Invisible work is an evocative term that has come to describe many kinds of activities and social dynamics. Work is considered invisible for a few, often overlapping, reasons: who does it, what “it” is (and its corollary social status), how it is compensated, and how it is physically seen. Thus, the unseen in invisible work refers both to symbolic and literal visibility. As with the post-industrial devaluation of women’s private domestic work in contrast with men’s public wage labor, work that is not highly visible as work may be valued less, and work that is of lesser value may remain out of sight. Most work is only partially visible because some parts are abstract (the listening ear of a therapist), hard to visualize (the back end of web design), intentionally concealed (drafts and edits of a print advertisement), or poorly compensated (college internships). The concept of invisible work is more than this—it is located at the intersection of social sight and value and describes labor, which is systematically overlooked and unrecognized. What and how we see (and do not see) invisible work is shaped by dynamics of visibility, which Mirzoeff (2010, p.1) defines as “the means by which authority claims to visualize the flows of history and thus validates itself.” Here Mirzoeff joins the matter of the visual—images—with the mental work of visualizing—the ability to conceptualize that which lies beyond our sight. Foster (1988, p.ix) puts it another way. He understands visibility as “how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein.” By positioning visibility in how we are,

“able, allowed or made,” to see, Foster also positions the visual in relationship to both imagination and authority. These concepts of visibility help us understand the ways that our seeing is constructed and to consider the ways that vision interacts with our capacities to know and envision. In this way, invisible work takes shape in the interwoven loops between visibility and the social location/ construction of workers and particular forms of labor or, as Budd (2016, p.28) evocatively articulates, “the eye sees what the mind knows.” Invisible work is located in the confluence of low visibility and low status across multiple categories at the same time, such as our inability to imagine “wages for housework,” or to conceptualize/value the studied-skill of working the land.

In this way, the low social esteem and invisibility of some physical labor and maintenance work means that it is consigned to low status workers. For example, the poor social opinion of undocumented Latinx laborers (in white, dominant American society) is reinforced by the low status and invisibility of their work, which further depreciates their social status. The study of invisible work as a form of visibility takes up each of these parts—interrogating the boundaries that separate work from not work, and the political, economic and visual factors that contribute to and result from labor’s in/visibility. Significantly, the in/visibility of this work is in the eye of the beholder. The labor of undocumented Latinx workers is highly visible to business owners in the restaurant industry for example, and to their families in the U.S. and abroad (in the form of emotional longing or remittances). When I write about structural invisibility, I am referring to dominant culture and institutional frames, while keeping the directionality and situated conception of in/visibility in mind. I address this question directly in Chapter Five with a section entitled, *invisible to whom*, in which I explore how the teachers’ work remains invisible to particular groups and social structures.

*tracing invisible work*

The study of invisible work has a rich history, although it has been little explored in relation to teaching. The concept seeks to shed light on unpaid, unrecognized, and undervalued labor largely performed by women. In this section, I present a collection of some of the words and images from artists and scholars who have explored the topic and influence my own study and analysis of teachers' invisible work.

Arlene Kaplan Daniels, who coined the phrase “invisible work,” studied the concept largely in relation to the voluntary work of upper-class women. Daniels challenges us to see “work” as a folk concept and to interrogate the cultural distinctions that mark certain activities as “work” and others as “not-work.” She holds up several binaries—hard/easy, trained/natural, have to do/want to do, public/private, paid/unpaid—as cultural constructions that serve to reward certain kinds of activities while rendering others invisible. According to Daniels, these lines were drawn (or at least more deeply etched) with industrialization and the growth of a wage labor economy. As she writes:

When, before industrialization, men and women worked together in a productive unit within the home, it was easy to see both as workers. The separation of home and workplace changed the meaning of the work men and women do. (1987, p.411)

Post-industrialization, “work” came to mean paid labor, outside the home, largely carried out by men. For wage-earning men, the distinctions between work and leisure were clearly delineated. Home was “not-work” and the efforts of women in the home—the cooking, cleaning, maintenance of house, and caring for young children (among other tasks)—were recast in relation to wage labor as a series of negatives—not paid, not skilled, not especially hard.



Thus, the perception of domestic work as women's-work as not-work is forged by the ideology of modern capitalism, which divides all of life up into new categories. Unpaid activities or practices (like love, care, and washing up) that are difficult to commodify, become devalued—if sentimentalized—in the capitalist economy and the reverse is true as well—activities that are not highly valued are not paid or well-paid. To make sense of the idea of women's work and what kinds of work are made important or immaterial, compensated or uncompensated, we must join this capitalist critique with social analysis. Cedric Robinson's (1983) notion of "racial capitalism" and the feminist concept of "capitalist patriarchy" (Eisenstein 1999) are useful for recording the inextricable links between capitalism and social oppression. Black feminists Crenshaw (1989) and Collins (1991) developed the theory of intersectionality, in part to put these ideas in conversation—patriarchy AND racism AND capitalism (and a host of other isms)—to understand the way these "interlocking systems of oppression" relate and cooperate. Intersectionality is also a theory of identity. It seeks to study and understand how these systems of power and social inequality are lived and felt. The theory asserts that a class-only, or race-only, or gender-only analysis is insufficient to understand the operations of power and how they are enacted and experienced within particular social locations, groups and bodies. Intersectionality advocates for a complex, additive investigation of the "reciprocally constructing phenomena" of power, inequality, and identity(ies). The concept of invisible work and the study of teacher's invisible labor merits intersectional investigation and analysis. To make sense of invisible work, we must consider multiple facets of the social situation, taking account of the worker, the type of labor, compensation, and visibility of the work, alongside an intersectional reading of the power relations and social identities that shape the conditions and lived experiences of those involved.

Judith Rollins takes up this intersectional lens in her study of Black female domestic workers and their white female employers (1985). In addition to conducting interviews with twenty women from

each group, Rollins herself worked as a domestic for ten households for up to six months as a form of ethnographic research. She writes of this experience in terms of a felt sense of invisibility and of the material ways that her employers failed to take note of her presence. She recounts very private conversations that were held in her company as if she were not there and of another employer locking her inside the house when she went out. A third woman left home with her husband shortly after Rollins arrived to clean, leading to the following observation:

About a half hour after they left, I noticed the house getting cooler. The temperature continued to drop to, I would guess, 50-55—not comfortable even with my activity. I realized they had turned the heat down as if there were no one there! (p.208)

This routine, which Rollins describes as a “pattern that would be repeated every time they left the house,” is more than the devaluation of her household work, it denies her very existence. To act as though she was not there to feel the cold of winter suggests either that she is not worth the small expenditure of a few hours’ heat, or that she is somehow inhuman<sup>46</sup>—that the cold of the house doesn’t affect her the same way it does her employers. Part of Rollins’s invisibility as a domestic is tied up with ideals of servitude—that to be done well, servants and service work should be unobtrusive and barely visible. Another, bigger piece owes to her perceived identity as a working class Black woman<sup>47</sup>. The histories of slavery, colonialism, phrenology, police brutality tell of people of color being regarded as invisible or less than human to white people. Rollins elaborates:

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<sup>46</sup> The false notion of biological differences between Black and white people persists. Hoffman et al.’s 2016 study of white laypeople, medical students and residents confirmed a host of erroneous beliefs among each of the groups including that Black people age more slowly than white, and that their skin is thicker.

<sup>47</sup> She writes, “I told them I had been doing domestic work for a number of years in another city and showed them letters of reference (written by me) if they asked.” “In no case,” she continues, “did an employer know I was doing research” (1985, p.10).

This devaluation can range from the perception of the persons as fully human but inferior to conceptualizing them as subhuman (Fanon's colonized "animal") to the extreme of not seeing a being at all. And though this mechanism is functioning at all times when whites and people of color interact in this society, it takes on exaggerated form when the person of color also holds a low-status occupational and gender position—an unfortunate convergence of statuses for the Black female domestic servant. (1985, p.212)

Rollins' interpretation of her own invisibility, of the experiences of the Black domestics she interviewed, and of the social relations that produce these dynamics, draws on a multilayered analysis of situated social inequality and the intersecting oppressions of sexism, racism, and classism. In her depiction, Rollins points to a spectrum of racism from viewing "the other" as inferior to subhuman that maps onto the "convergence of statuses" of a particular worker and suggests the variety of ways that invisible work may be perceived and experienced. Significantly, Rollins's analysis focuses in large part on the tools of resistance these women employ in the face of invisibility—their interpretations of systemic inequality, moral critiques of the families they worked for, and their own narratives of strength and self-reliance in contrast to their employers' dependency (on them and other servants).

Dorothy Smith's theory and method of Institutional Ethnography (1987) offers a framework for the recognition and study of invisible work from the perspectives of ordinary people in their everyday lives. This approach to sociology grew out of her work in standpoint theory (alongside feminist scholars Harding 1987; Harraway 1991; Collins 1991 and others), a concept that calls special attention to women's ways of knowing, and the positionalities of knowers more generally. Smith ties this theory of knowledge and method of inquiry to her own split experience of working

as both sociology professor and single mother of two young boys. “Sociology had almost nothing to say about” the bodily experience of mothering and home work and the contradictions of life at home and in the academy (2005, p.11). She takes an expansive approach to the study of labor, looking beyond paid employment to consider a broad range of activities and efforts. Smith writes of “work in a ‘generous’ sense,” a notion which conveys both a wide lens and an inclusionary air of access (to theories, ideas, and identities):

When institutional ethnographers use the concept of ‘work,’ we aren’t just talking about what people do on the job. Like the discovery of housework or mothering as work, institutional ethnographers use a generous conception of work that applies to anything people do that takes time, depends on definite conditions, is done in particular actual places, and is intentional. (2005, p.151)

This mode of inquiry, grounded in peoples’ experiences and perceptions as the basis of social study, considers labor from the laborer’s standpoint. Given its feminist origins, institutional ethnography (IE) practitioners give particular focus to “women’s work,” uncompensated labor, poorly compensated work, and the work of paid employees that lies outside of official job requirements. As a fellow IE scholar, Marjorie DeVault writes that IEs “[d]o not privilege paid work but keep in mind the broader requirements of embodied existence—people’s need to sustain themselves, their connections of mutual care and dependence, and the activities that nurture and educate a next generation” (2008, p.5-6). This “generous concept of work” shapes my interest in teacher labor and the dynamics of in/visibility that construct parts of teacher work as hyper-visible, and others as unseen or unimportant. This lens, together with the political economic and intersectional frameworks of the other scholars cited here (Daniels, Collins, and Rollins in particular), offers a structure for my study of teacher labor, for valuing teachers’ experiences of

their work beyond the narrow frames of policies and discourses such as value-added measurement and Advance.

### **CARE IN CONTEXT**

Not all invisible work is carework<sup>48</sup>, and not all carework is invisible, but the concepts overlap and share theoretical and historical roots in feminist scholarship. And in the teachers' images and narratives, these frames for seeing (and not seeing) teacher labor are often interwoven. This section traces the origins of the study and scholarly articulations of carework to consider what constitutes caring labor; how to parse and analyze different kinds of care; and how these various frameworks for counting care map onto (or don't) the teachers' pictures, stories and experiences.

As Lynch states plainly, "caring work is low status work generally undertaken by low status people" (2007, p.551). And, as with invisible women's work, the low status of carework derives, in part, from the cultural denial of caring as work—the view of caring practices as facets of innate female dispositions as opposed to labor. Lynch and Lyons (2009, p.55) explain,

The reluctance to name care as work arises also from the public allegiance to the traditional feminine (as opposed to feminist) ethic of care which defines care as a moral obligation (for women in particular) governed by rules of selflessness and self-sacrifice (Gilligan, 1995). It is defined in this deeply patriarchal code as a 'duty,' not a job.

Carework is overwhelmingly performed by women. In the home women take on "second shifts" (Hochschild & Machung 1989) of caring labor, doing domestic and emotion work for partners and children; in caring professions like nursing, social work, daycare, eldercare, and teaching female workers dominate; and in unpaid add-ons to paid employment women are often responsible for

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<sup>48</sup> I use several terms to talk about caring (besides caring): caring labor, care, caring practice, but especially carework. Following Luttrell (2012; Dodson & Zinzavage 2007; Lynch 2009, and many others), I use the phrase "carework," written as a single word, to underline the fact that caring *is* work.

organizing social celebrations at the office, tidying shared spaces, listening to the concerns of co-workers, and more. As with women's work in general, carework also suffers from the dynamics of sentimentalism (Douglas 1977)—the disjuncture between cultural values and material conditions. Thus, while paid and unpaid caring work is held up as romantic and noble, the substantive conditions of careworkers tell another story. England, Budig & Folbre (2002) write of a “wage penalty for care work,” that refers to both the economic burdens of unpaid caring (both financial costs and deferred wages), as well as differentials in the paid compensation of comparable work. Their study found that “working in a caring occupation leads to a significant net wage penalty of 5–6% for both men and women,” (p.464) and that penalty rises, when disaggregated by gender and profession, to 41% as in the case of female childcare workers<sup>49</sup>. This means that all things being equal, in terms of worker education, seniority, breaks in employment, and hourly requirements, workers are effectively taxed on labor that involves an explicit caring component. To support this assertion, Lynch (2007, p.551) cites statistics on the comparative pay of careworkers with other “low-skilled” positions. “In the United States (in 2004) child care workers had a mean annual wage of \$18,060 which was lower than that of baggage porters and bell hops at \$21,720 or non-farm animal caretakers at \$19,620. Those employed in personal care services had annual mean wages of \$19,590 while the mean annual income for janitors and cleaners was \$20,800 for the same period.” Carework is devalued in part because, as women's work, it is sentimentalized as pleasurable, as duty, as natural and not skilled, and fundamentally as not quite work.

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<sup>49</sup> They did not disaggregate data by race, but if they had it would likely have pointed to a further economic penalty for people of color as statistics suggest (Patten 2016).

## DIALECTICS OF CARE

Broadly speaking, carework is accorded low social status in policy, public discourse and remuneration. Yet, not all caring is created equal and one major effort in the study of carework has been to offer nuanced classification, to move past the “I know it when I see it” (Stewart, 1964) model of recognition to a categorical analysis of caring. To this end, feminist scholars of carework (Lynch 2007, 2009; Valenzuela 1999; Tronto 1989; Noddings 1984, etc.) organize caring labor into categories—as in different kinds of caring practices, and different caring roles—who cares and in what ways. Many of these dialectics follow the contours of a central framing in care theory—the division between caring *for* and *about*. Caring for and about is a widely cited concept in the field with various shades of interpretation (Noddings 1984, 1999, 2002; McKamey 2011; Luttrell 2013; Glenn 2000)<sup>50</sup>. Yet across differing value judgments about the “preferred” form of caring (Noddings 2002, p.23) and ideas about how they intersect (Luttrell 2013), the theory speaks to distinctions in the direct practice of intimate small scale caring (*for*), and caring (*about*) which takes place at some remove—abstract, distant, or intellectual forms of care and solidarity. Tronto writes about this split as reflective of a gendered hierarchy in men’s and women’s work. She explains:

The script runs something like this: Men care about money, career, ideas, and advancement; men show they care by the work they do, the values they hold, and the provisions they make for their families. Women care for their families, neighbors, friends; women care for their families by doing the direct work of caring. Furthermore, the script

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<sup>50</sup> Caring for and about is a central concept in the literature, but it is addressed in different ways by different scholars. McKamey (2016) for example, writes about “caring for” as a patronizing orientation which positions the caregiver (youth workers in the case of her study) as competent and care-receiver as “culturally deficient.” She contrasts this approach with “caring with” an intersubjective agentic mode of caring, and “caring about” which she also defines as intersubjective and inclusive of institutional structures, social identities and injustice; Luttrell (2013) and others (Glenn 2000, etc.) write about carework as being comprised of both caring for and about, where caring about reflects an ethic of care—the thoughts, feelings and attention that accompany, shape, and drive the practice of caring for.

continues, men care about more important things, whereas women care about less important. (1989, p.172)<sup>51</sup>

Tronto’s analysis parses the *fors* and *abouts* of caring labor in terms of proximity, scale, and status. Women are closer than men to the “direct work of caring;” they care *for* on an intimate scale (families, neighbors, friends), while men care broadly *about* “money” and “ideas”; men’s caring is higher status and considered “more important,” than women’s; and finally, it is women’s more intimate/proximal forms of care that enable men to focus on the work of ideas/thinking, etc.

As Table 6 illustrates, these distinctions in caring work divide the *fors* and *abouts* along the same lines of gender and power that shaped the construction of women’s invisible labor at the onset of industrialization. Caring *for* is positioned as women’s work—natural, low-skilled, private, personal and poorly paid (or unpaid); and caring *about* is considered men’s work—skilled, intellectual labor in the public sphere.

Table 6. Caring for and about

caring FOR	caring ABOUT
Private	Public
Feminine	Masculine
Physical	Mental
Feeling	Thinking
Natural	Learned
Low skilled	High(er) skilled
Low status	High(er) status

To varying degrees, the *fors* and *abouts* chart an inverse relationship between what I call the proximate demands of caring and the social status of the work (closer=lower status, distant=higher). Further, the status of carework is directly related to gender, class, and race with

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<sup>51</sup> I want to be clear that Tronto is both critiquing the gendered structures which assign particular roles (and corollary value) to men and women, and also to the underlying private/ public split in gendered conceptions of work.



low status and low paid carework overwhelmingly performed by women, people of color, and immigrants. By parsing these kinds of caring work, feminist scholars have worked to re-center and valorize undervalued and invisible forms of labor. However, in the important work of holding up the proximate demands of *caring for* (as opposed to *about*), white feminist scholars have (in some cases) reproduced this binary framing, thereby re-inscribing racialized ideals of white femininity that obscure the complex, multivalent, and intersectional work of caring in communities of color.

#### LOVE, COMMUNITY, AND COLOR-FULL CARE

Thompson and others (Rolon-Dow 2005; Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus 2006; McKamey 2011) critique this public-private split as a form of “colorblindness” in care theory, or the failure to account for race and cultural contexts in defining what caring looks like and how it operates. To this end, the public/ private divide and the idealization of private caring (parent-child, loving home, etc.) reflects unspoken assumptions of whiteness—privileges that many communities of color have not had access to, and distinct cultural values. Thompson contrasts white enthusiasm for family care with theories “grounded in Black women’s lives.” She writes:

White, middle-class culture takes for granted the status of the home as a ‘haven in a heartless world,’ but historically, there has been no sure place of refuge for African Americans, since racism and poverty can invade any home...In any case, most African American women have not had the luxury of spending much time in their homes; most have had to watch other—white—women’s children and clean other women’s homes, coming back to their own only well after the school day was over. The home, then, has not been the protected site for African American women that it has been for white, middle-class women. Nor is it claimed as a distinctly feminine space in which private-sphere values can be nurtured in isolation from the surrounding society. On the contrary, caring in the Black family has had to be, in part, about the surrounding society, because it has had to provide

children with the understanding and the strategies they need to survive racism. (1998, p.532)

Thus the home and family-life have their own histories and social valences in the Black community. Women of color have seldom had access to white domestic femininity and the concept of home for Black women is layered with narratives of racism and poverty, slavery and redlining, and forced and low-wage work in white homes with white families. Further, as Thompson argues, the threats of racism were and are such that Black women did and do not have the luxury to retreat from the public world to home spaces, rather, home life was (and is) oriented around helping children navigate the racist society. bell hooks positions the historical value of what she calls, “homeplaces,” for African-American women in different terms, as vital “spaces of care and nurturance in the face of the brutal harsh reality of racist oppression, of sexist oppression,” (1990, p.384). Writing with admiration for Black women’s domestic labor (in their own homes as opposed to others’), hooks suggests,

This task of making homeplace was not simply a matter of black women providing service; it was about the construction of a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination. We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in that “homeplace,” most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits.

For hooks, the African-American home functions as a refuge from the racist world outside, a protective enclosure where Black people (and Blackness) are valued and nurtured and encouraged to grow. However, hooks too sees the shelter of Black homeplaces in the context of—and as a form of resistance to the dominant culture of white supremacy. In this way, both hooks and Thompson construct Black homes in relation to white racism—whether as private haven or training ground to survive the outside world. And both Thompson and hooks see Black women’s

labor in their own homes as a form of resistance. In this way, care and justice are inextricably linked. As Thompson contends, caring in the Black community means,

Bringing about justice for the next generation, and justice means creating the kinds of conditions under which all people can flourish. In the Black social activist tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, love is intrinsically tied to justice. Love and caring do not step back from the world in order to return to innocence, but step out into the world in order to change it.

Care in this way is linked to communal identity and thus the borders around family care, the care of extended kin and community, and care for policy, ideas and social justice are fluid. This perspective dovetails with the work of other critical care scholars such as Valenzuela who argues for interpersonal “authentic caring” in combination with culturally relevant pedagogy (2010, p. 109); Rolon-Dow who advocates a critical care praxis that requires teachers to extend their caring work “Outside their classroom doors to challenge hegemonic educational practices, policies, and structures” (2005, p.107); Luttrell (2013) who highlights children’s reciprocal work in what she calls “choreographies of care,” a concept that underscores the complex rhythms and collaborations required in the lives of working class families (predominantly) of color; and Ginwright’s theory of “healing justice,” a framework that links individual and communal wellbeing for people and communities of color with social justice. As he suggests:

Rather than viewing well-being as an individual act of self care, healing justice advocates view healing as political action. Healing is political because those that focus on healing in urban communities recognize how structural oppression threatens the well-being of individuals and communities, and understands well-being as a collective necessity rather than an individual choice. (2016, p.8)

In this way, healing justice—a particular form of carework, like critical care praxis, authentic caring, and the tradition that Thompson articulates of love and justice in the Black community,

tunnels through and builds bridges across the binary conceptions of caring *for* and *about*, blending and blurring solidarity work with love labor, family caring with social justice.

This social orientation towards care and justice in communities of color has been born to some degree of necessity—structural inequities and the inability to shield family from racism and oppression even in home spaces. But it also reflects a set of historically rooted cultural practices and social values, distinct from white, middle-class norms. The centrality of community has been widely described by indigenous Mexican scholars around the principle of *comunalidad*, a notion of identity as integral to communal life (Maldonado 2002; Meyer & Maldonado 2004; Chomsky, Meyer & Maldonado 2010; Luna 2003, 2010, etc.); Ginwright focuses his analysis of healing justice around the South African principle of *Ubuntuism*, “The idea that humanness is found through our interdependence, collective engagement and service to others” (p.144, 2016); and Thompson (1998) writes of the West African origins of “othermothering,” (Collins, 1990; hooks 1984) a practice in African American communities wherein women care for and raise children who are not biologically their own. She explains,

The tradition of “othermothering” is not simply an adaptation to conditions in which birth mothers (due to slavery or economic extremity) might not be available, nor is it a makeshift or second-best approximation of mothering...Rather, it is an honored tradition dating back to African American’s West African roots, a tradition in which childrearing was shared by adults even when mothers were available...Significantly, then, othermothering is not solely about caring for children, but is also a way of sustaining adult and community relationships.

Thus, as Thompson describes, theories and practices of care in Black communities and other communities of color, are shaped by a combination of social forces, intention, and tradition. This orientation to care as both private and public, rooted in love and social change, grows from

histories of systemic violence and oppression, commitments to social justice, and long-held cultural values.

The needs, cultural frameworks, and values for and around care in communities of color are distinct from white middle-class norms, and as a result, the shape of care theories and practices in these communities often look and operate differently. Dominant white feminized models of care such as Noddings' notion of the wholly attentive, "engrossed," "one-caring" may not be available or desirable to caregivers faced with the challenges of systemic inequality and strong commitments to community. Caring outside the white norm may or may not look like dominant representations of loving attention. Thompson 1998; De Vault 1999; Ward 1995; Collins 1991, and others write about the way that care can look like survival in the form of wage labor or emotional support and resistance in the face of racism. Citing Collins, Thompson (1998) writes,

The caring work of Black mothers, Collins notes, may be too laborious to allow time or energy for the kind of affectionate display that is associated with mothering in the dominant culture. But sheer physical, wage-earning labor is an "act of love," a commitment to the survival and flourishing of one's children.

That Black women's caring for their families through paid labor means time and attention diverted from their children and, not infrequently, focused on another family or set of children, adds shades of complexity and meaning to what counts as care—time and attention are not necessarily conferred in proportion to love<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> My own mom, who is a brilliant writer and editor read through a draft of my document. And in response to this sentence, made the following comment in the margins "Wonder about this point vis-à-vis your overall thesis. Could the same not be said of the middle class working mother?" I think about her long work hours throughout my childhood and I take her point (with some distinctions). The dominant picture of white female motherhood is unattainable/ unattractive/ repressive for most women. My mom's professional life was dedicated in part to mine and my brother's financial security and to modeling work success and satisfaction for us (carework). And yet, my mother's status as a good and loving parent was not called into question in the way that Black mothers' love often is. Partly because she continued to take up the traditional mother work in second shifts of making dinner, cleaning, etc. And partly because our economic circumstances afforded her and us the support of paid childcare, house cleaning, private school tuition,

Teaching children to survive racism, oppression, and systemic violence is another distinct form of carework. Thompson (1998) elaborates,

One task of the Black family...is to prepare children to cope: to face racism with resilience...Far from trying to protect childish innocence, caring African American adults are intent on alerting young people to the various threats to their survival and flourishing, to help them to cope with racism (and sexism) without loss of integrity. Numerous works testify to the various ways in which—both directly and indirectly—African American children and adolescents learn the coping skills required to survive in a racist society.

This kind of caring work takes the form of what Black families for generations have called “the talk” about how to manage interactions with police; it looks like critical lessons on the history of anti-Black racism and the work of intentionally educating children in counter-histories of Black strength, pride, and achievement; it looks like disciplining Black children’s public behavior to avoid white confrontation and racist judgment; it looks like searching out models of Blackness in popular culture, or the work of parents hand-coloring the white characters in picture books to make them Brown. These configurations of care as pedagogy, advocacy, resistance, or discipline don’t look like white-normed models of carework, and consequently are often misunderstood or rendered invisible by dominant policies, institutions, and academic theories.

Dorothy Smith (1993) coined the term, “Standard North American Family” or SNAF (I would add a less-snappy “W” for white to the acronym—SNAWF?) to crystalize the force of this white

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and takeout dinners. Although our parents rarely reached home before 7pm, my brother and I were not considered “latchkey kids” because we had a full time nanny and a host of paid afterschool “enrichment.” So, socially we and she were seen differently. And I wonder how the extra support afforded by our economic privilege may have allowed my mom to be more present in the enjoyable/ loving/ nurturing parts of parenting because others took up the work of schlepping to and from school, cleaning house, etc.

middle-class norm and the corollary set of assumptions that guide policy, practice, and institutional behavior. Smith defined SNAF as:

A conception of the family as a legally married couple sharing a household. The adult male is in paid employment; his earnings provide the economic basis of the family-household. The adult female may also earn an income but her primary responsibility is to the care of the husband, household, and children. (1999, p.159)

Written into SNAF are assumptions of whiteness, heterosexuality, class, and family structure. The SNAF ideal, like the independent, self-interested *homo economicus* (a theory I take up in Chapter Seven), is plugged into economic models, formal policies and informal practices and also functions as an “ideological code,” a powerful universalizing discourse that, like the genetic code, “replicates its organization in multiple and various sites” (Smith 1999, p.159). In order to locate caring work and understand the way that it operates, we must consider factors of race, class, culture, gender, and sexuality, and how they play out within societies and institutions pulsing with the genetic code of SNAF. We must simultaneously bring unspoken frames of whiteness (along with class, gender, sexuality, culture) forward, and tilt our angle of view to probe experiences, practices and constructions of care that live at the edges and off to the side.

## **MAKING IT VISUAL**

### *art and invisible work*

Artists (particularly since the 1970s movements of feminist and conceptual art) have also taken up the topics of invisible labor and carework in drawings, paintings, videos, and performance. Since these concepts center around dynamics of visibility and visibility, visual and conceptual art have been rich settings for discourse, activism, and conversation. Over the last forty years, artists have engaged their practice to force unseen labor into view, literally creating visual and experiential dissonances between social categories, expectations, and experiences. Because my study pivots

around images and artworks—images made and collected by teacher participants and my own arts-based research—I wanted to situate the “making” in my study in the broader context of artists in the field. In this section I will describe bodies of work of three artists—Mary Kelly, Mierle Ladermen-Ukeles, and Ramiro Gomez—to consider the visual tools they use to highlight and disrupt discourses about motherhood, maintenance, and low wage immigrant labor.



Figure 9. Mary Kelly, Post-Partum Document (1975) [nappy liners]



Figure 10. Mary Kelly, Post-Partum Document (1975) [wool vests]

Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document (1973-9) is a visual record of her son's development in his first six years alongside her own development as a mother. The multimedia artwork, presented in a series of exhibitions and later as a book (1983), is divided into six parts that trace particular facets of his growth, her shifting identity, and their relationship over time. The first section, “Documentation I,” marks the baby's transition from breast milk to solid foods. Kelly details the type and quantity—measured in ounces and teaspoons—of food her baby consumes at particular hours, printing the tallies on his dirty cloth nappy liners. Other sections record transcripts of his



early speech utterances alongside her typewritten analyses, baby clothes, plaster handprints, and journal-style reflections on early motherhood.

Kelly consciously adopts a scientific aesthetic. She presents the visual materials as artifacts, each accompanied by careful, clinical observations, generally typewriter-written and often in the removed voice of an expert—social scientist, analyst, doctor, etc. This clinical aesthetic plays at questions of legitimacy. It lends seriousness to her work of mothering and of art-making about mothering while drawing attention to the incongruences—all the ways that these notes and markings are both incredibly important and also fairly banal. In their systematic quality, repetition, and sheer volume, they invoke the rhythms of maternal labor and, significantly, generate a material record. These images and texts function in part as a tally or proof of the day's (hour's/ week's/ etc.) work, calling out and marking the tasks, achievements, observations, and worries that may otherwise slip by unseen, blurring with the cyclical churn of all the other moments and days of washing, feeding, teaching, and caring.

Kelly's fastidiousness captures something so resonant for me about my own experience of early motherhood, the vigilance and the desire to rely on known quantities. In the first days, when my son Sol was losing weight, my husband Byron carefully charted his wet and dirty diapers and my doses of pain medication following a difficult labor and delivery. Together, we tracked Sol's nursing sessions on an iPad app—how often, for how long, and on which breast. In those first weeks of motherhood, in a space of mothering and nursing that did not feel “natural” in all the ways I had anticipated, I clung to those notes as some measure that he was OK, and that I was doing enough. They were evidence of my hard work—twenty minutes on each side every two hours. It was something seeable when the mechanisms and quantities of breastfeeding were hard to see, when the self I had known was hard to recognize.

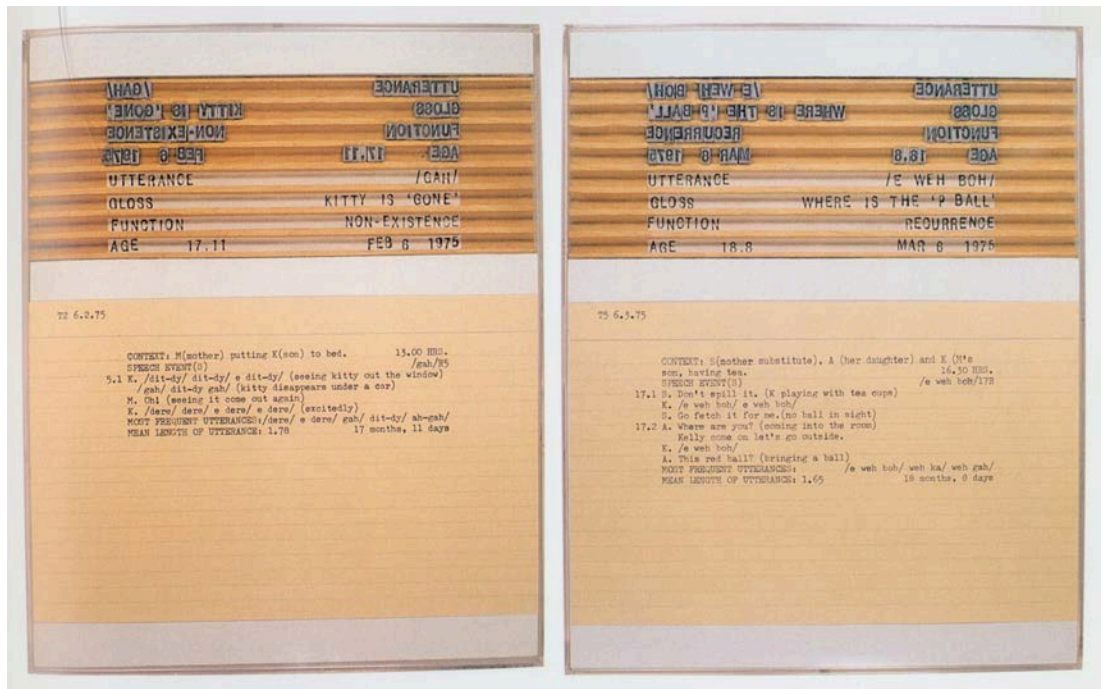


Figure 11. Mary Kelly, Post-Partum Document (1973-79) [Analyzed utterances and related speech events]

These revelations and the emotional tenor of the artwork are, much like mothering, greater than the sum of their parts. The life of the piece is in its totality—all six “Documents”, 139 works, over six years. Like development, like relationships, like teaching, like mothering, it is hard to capture the whole of it in one isolated moment or single snapshot. Rather, it takes shape in patterns and over time. The Post-Partum Document pivots around multiple dialectics of in/visibility. The work is in dialogue with art movements and conventions of the time— notions about conceptual art (challenging the maxim that it not be personal), standards for the exhibition of contemporary works, and the common sense, still strong conviction that the roles of serious artist and mother are incommensurate. Kelly writes about framing the works in order to camouflage their content:

The framing, for example, parodies a familiar type of museum display in so far as it allows my archaeology of everyday life to slip unannounced into the great hall and ask important questions of its keepers... (1999)

With her pseudo-scientific aesthetic and framed works, she takes up the armature of high art to mark absences in the discourse—the invisibility of mothering and housework in contemporary art spaces and society more broadly. Within the work, inside the frames, *Post-Partum Document* draws out and makes visible so many aspects of motherhood and childrearing that are often unseen. It is not a sentimental view of mothering, although there are many tender elements: crayon drawings, tiny clothing, and plaster-cast hand- and footprints. These too are part of mothering (and worthy art subjects), Kelly seems to suggest, alongside critical analysis, reflexivity, boredom, repetition, anxiety, physicality, and frustration. One crucial element of this piece, an element that is tied to the work as artwork (as opposed to text alone), is its materiality in time and space—the multiple rooms it takes up, the time it takes to read the notes and diagrams, the movement from one work to the next echoing the progression of development (if not necessarily in linear fashion). In this way, the act of engaging with the work over time, the recurring images and texts, bring the viewer experientially into the tasks and thoughts of mothering. This work, then, is not only about making invisible carework visible, but making it solid, palpable, and perhaps felt.

At around the same time, Mierle Laderman Ukeles published “MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART, 1969! Proposal for an exhibition ‘CARE’” to shed light on private and public maintenance work in the home and in society. The document consists of two parts: first, a stream-of-consciousness style invective on the simultaneous importance and burdens of maintenance work; and second, a three-part plan for a museum exhibit on the subject. Like Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document*, the focus on care and maintenance grows out of Ukeles’s own experience as a new mother (her first of three children was born in 1968). She writes:

I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random order).

I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also, (up to now separately) I “do” Art. (1973)

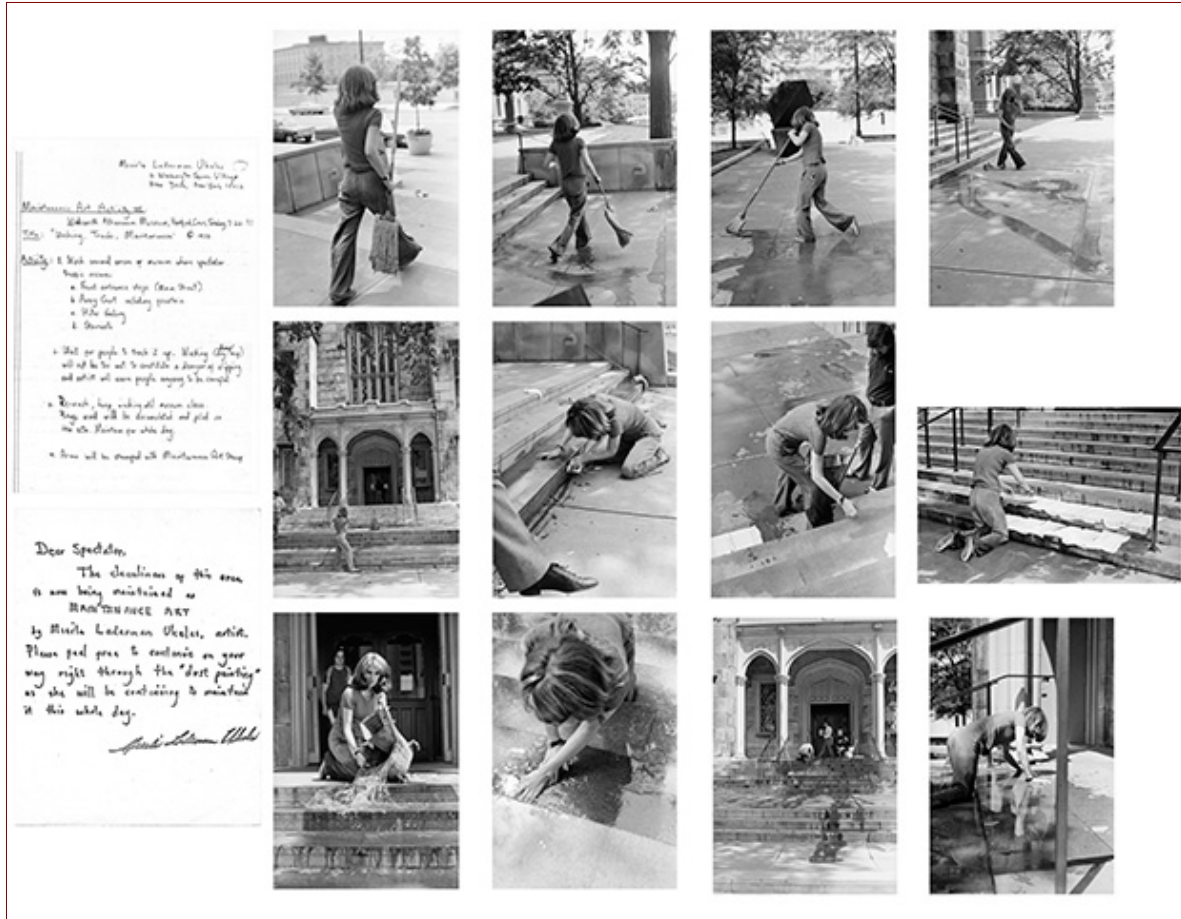


Figure 12. Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1973) Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside

As she enumerates her identity in that first line, it seems that one of these roles—woman, wife, mother, *artist*—doesn't look like the others. Maintenance work is required of women, wives, and mothers, but it lives outside the visible frames of the artist's practice. The Manifesto was an attempt to draw these identities together and to make public space for them to sit side by side. The "up to now separately" qualifier signals a shift in her practice, the decision to call her maintenance work "art" and make art about maintenance. As she proposes in the "Part One: Personal" exhibition:

Now, I will simply do these maintenance everyday things,  
 and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art.

And she does. While the exhibition proposal remains unaccepted, she goes on to document her home maintenance work in the form of a written log and with photographs, which are printed alongside the *Manifesto in Artforum* (1971). Later, she carries out a series of public maintenance performance pieces that include washing museum steps and floors and dusting a mummy case.

From the start, Ukeles's vision embodies the second wave insistence on joining the personal with the political. By situating her own work at home within the larger category of "maintenance work," she highlights the ways that women's unpaid labor is linked with the low wage work of other marginalized groups such as paid domestic, janitorial, and sanitation workers, and how artists' work in private and public spaces relies on the paid and unpaid labor of maintenance workers. Embedded in this manifesto (and in her substantial body of work over nearly five decades) is a multilayered social critique that extends in and between discourses of women's work, mothering, contemporary art spaces, inequality, the low wage economy, waste, and ecological exploitation. It is a social view of intersectionality where the unit of measurement is society as opposed to the individual. For example, the three components of the proposed exhibition "CARE" include the personal (cited above), the general, and earth maintenance. In addition to carrying out all her housework in a gallery space ("MY WORKING WILL BE THE WORK," she writes), Ukeles intends to interview a range of people in different classes and professions about their maintenance work (with questions such as "what is the relationship between maintenance and freedom"); and to conduct earth maintenance by purifying or rehabilitating containers of polluted air, ravaged land, and other degraded natural materials. For Ukeles, her own burdensome housework is part of a larger plight, inseparable from the "lousy status" of other kinds of maintenance work, and widespread environmental degradation.

At the heart of Ukeles’s manifesto is a fierce critique of a capitalist system that props up creation, consumption, newer, more, and better stuff (she calls this “development”) and conversely devalues sustainability, reparative work, and care (“maintenance”). By Ukeles’s calculation, the exploitation of women as unpaid home maintenance workers is interconnected with the exploitation of low-wage maintenance workers, and the further exploitation of natural resources and low regard for earth maintenance such as sanitation and conservation. Caring privately for people, homes, and spaces is inextricably linked with public forms of care and maintenance.



Figure 13. (2013) Yoselin and the glass of water



Figure 14. (2014) Olga and Madison get ready for school

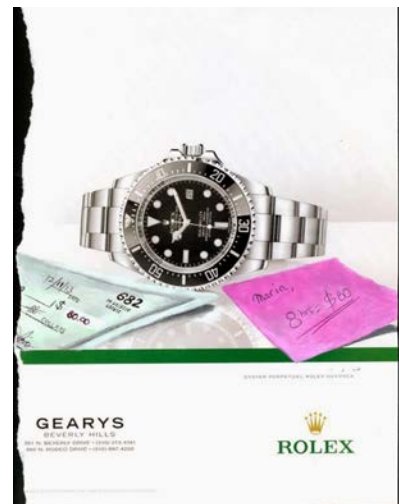


Figure 15. (2013) Maria’s paycheck

The third artist whose work I will describe comes out of a different time and tradition than Kelly and Ukeles—40 years post-second wave, he is a gay male millennial, and first generation son of Mexican immigrants. On canvas, cardboard cutouts, and 8x10 inch pages from torn magazines, Ramiro Gomez also takes up the subject of invisible work and care, specifically the work of Chican@ laborers in Los Angeles—the nannies, housekeepers, gardeners, pool cleaners, and handymen—that enable a particular style of luxury living. Across a range of scales and materials, Gomez paints workers into their places of work—fancy homes, gardens, patios, and playgrounds—forcing their labor and subjectivities into view.

In a twist on a series of Hockney paintings that depict an upper-middle class Los Angeles of the 1960s, Gomez repaints the scenes, replacing white playboys and art collectors with Brown-skin Chican@ laborers scrubbing shower tile, blowing leaves and cleaning the cerulean swimming pools. In life-sized cardboard portraits that Gomez displays, guerilla-style, in public spaces, he stations a Latina worker waiting at the bus stop in a fancy part of town, and male Latino gardeners dotted along private lawns or trimming the meticulously manicured hedges (Figure 17 and Figure 18). Drawn in part from his own experience as the son of a truck driver and school janitor, this cycle of work developed in earnest during a two-year position, working as a live-in nanny for a wealthy Los Angeles family. He talks about leafing through glossy lifestyle magazines that his employers kept around and noticing a glaring absence of workers in their pages. He elaborates:

I took it personally that the images presented an ideal devoid of the people working, as if we did not exist in that world. As I would turn the pages of these magazines, the feelings of a quiet rage at being excluded began to simmer and build up. I realized I had an opportunity to respond to the image presented to me and so I did, in the only way I could at the time, with paint. (Vartanian 2013)

He began tearing print advertisements out of design magazines like *Dwell* and *Architectural Digest*, and painting Chican@ workers into backyards, kitchens, and living room scenes—Rosa fluffing a pillow on a cream mid-century modern day bed, Reyna taking a break on tufted velvet armchair, her pail of cleaning supplies resting on the intentionally distressed hardwood floors. These figures—like most of his protagonists—are dressed in work clothes, t-shirts and jeans marked in short painterly brush strokes. And while he often names his subjects in the titles, their images are faceless, a choice that highlights the invisibility of their work to employers and society more broadly.



Figure 16. (2014) Porfirio Poolside



Figure 17. (2011) Hedges Cutout<sup>53</sup>



Figure 18. (2013) Osvaldo waits for his check

In his use of high-end advertisements and unsanctioned public art, Gomez's work delivers a forceful critique of inequality under capitalism. For example, "Maria's Paycheck" (Figure 15) is painted on top of a Rolex print ad. In the piece we see a hot pink post-it note and the corner of a personal check flanking the shiny men's watch (which retails for upwards of \$20,000), as if they are laying together on a nightstand. The post-it reads, "Maria, 8 hrs = \$80 and the check is handwritten for the same amount. This work and the gap between what is deemed fair wage for an employee and fair price for a designer watch, highlights a message that runs through Gomez's entire body of work—a series of massive incongruences between the fantastic wealth of the employers and poverty of the employees; an immigration system that criminalizes undocumented workers as it privileges employers by looking the other way; the solid presence of their sturdy forms and their faceless invisibility.

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<sup>53</sup> While this piece was made in 2011 before the protest cry and social meme of "hands up don't shoot" that originated with the police murder of Michael Brown on August 9, 2014, it is now all I can see. Brown bodies, kneeling at the side of the road, framed in a pose of labor, written with double meaning—all the invisible work of navigating white supremacy, structural oppression and the violent force of social fear.



Gomez's work pulls on the tensions of these gaps and incongruences—an uneasiness in the visual separation between the painterly depiction of the figures and the sharp detail of the photographic ads; in the sometimes awkward shapes of the workers' bodies—Osvaldo's humble form as he waits for his paycheck (Figure 18), workers looking down, seemingly trying to make themselves small. Engaging with this work as a viewer provokes a series of uncomfortable questions: *Is this their space? (And if not, how am I so sure?) What are they doing here? Are they allowed to be doing that—can Beatriz sit on that chair? Is Yoselin allowed the glass of water?* And the more we look, the more we wonder about the worker's relationship with the family, about their wages, about the rules of the house. Gomez's faceless figures force the viewer to reckon with their invisibility, their “unfortunate convergence of statuses” (Rollins 1985) of race, class, language, culture, and low wage work that mark them as inferior and invisible to white society. And yet, these works are very much a testament to their presence, caring depictions of their belonging and dignity. In Gomez's renderings, these figures take up space, space in the rarified worlds of luxury homes and life-sized, real world space on private lawns, and sides of roads in wealthy neighborhoods. These paintings literally make visible the invisible work of low-wage Latino laborers and they affirm the rights of Chican@s to be here and be seen—in their places of work, in public spaces, and in the United States.

## **COUNTERVISUALITY AND THE RIGHT TO BE SEEN**

If Mirzoeff's frame of visibility is useful in articulating the dynamics of invisible work, then his corollary theory of countervisuality works to locate the art and scholarship of this chapter. In the way that visibility occupies space at the intersections of what is seeable and knowable through dominant channels of power, countervisuality is an act of refusal, the refusal to accept visibility's claims to truth, neutrality, and authority. Mirzoeff defines countervisuality as the “right to look” and the “right to be seen,” a process that melds image with imagination, that both reflects and

generates resistance. As Milbrandt (2012, p.460) writes of the concept, “rather than being viewed as mere illustrations, [countervisualities] can be seen as attempts to bring into view, and into being, alternative ways of imagining and modes of becoming, that aim to challenge and undo authoritative regimes.” At their most potent, countervisualities defy dominant frameworks with other logics and possibilities. In small and large ways, they have real consequences in the real world for makers and viewers alike.

The very frames of “invisible work” and “carework” suggest resistance—the refusal to accept dominant social and capitalist frames for determining what counts as work, how much it counts for, and who it is visible to. The scholarly documentation and artful analysis of invisible work and care are also acts of resistance, forcing hidden forms and dynamics into view. Through text and image, strategically placed cardboard cutouts and insights into volunteer work, domestic labor, and more, these artists and scholars disrupt the boundaries between categories we thought we knew and challenge us to notice absences and erasures and to imagine new social futures and possibilities.

## **THE SOCIAL LOCATION OF TEACHERS’ INVISIBLE WORK**

The participant-teachers’ images and narratives of invisible work drew on many of the same discourses as these artists and scholars. The discourses cross over and between language about feminized labor, mothering and women’s work, and ideas about low-wage maintenance and racialized intersectional invisibility. In part, this is because teachers and teaching work occupy an ambiguous space in both the political economy and social imagination. Schools are liminal places, spaces that are conceptually and often aesthetically in between home and work (orderly desks paired with domestic decorations and student work on display), private and public, institutions that enforce many of the norms and regulations of the broader society, but also maintain their

own community cultures. Schools are both microcosms of the “real world” and small utopias where progressive ideas about democracy, justice, and discipline can flourish (as conversely can authoritarian or repressive policies).

Teachers are also positioned in between. As caregivers who must do “thinking work,” and some amount of active, physical labor, their jobs share elements of white-, pink-, and blue-collar employment. Teaching has been categorized as a “profession,” but has also been termed a “semi-profession” (Etzioni 1969), and there is a constant public call from those within and outside the field to “professionalize” by increasing compensation, training, specialization, standards for admission and evaluation, and on and on (Ingersoll & Merrill 2011). Apple (1983, p.32) writes of the “contradictory class location of teachers,” the idea that teachers are simultaneously both working class and middle class—with salaries and educational requirements that place them in the “petty bourgeoisie,” but a progressive loss of autonomy and de-skilling, along with vulnerabilities to fiscal crises, that aligns them with the interests of the “proletariat.” The teacher participants take up these dual discourses of invisible work in response to conflicting cultural expectations that originated with the feminization of the field in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Grumet 1988); expectations that they occupy the dueling roles of compliant, routinized public servant, strict child-minder, and nurturing mother figure.

Yet, it is important to clearly articulate the ways in which teaching work is very different from unpaid and low-wage domestic labor. While teachers’ salaries are always hotly debated, the median high school teacher’s salary in 2013 was \$56,383 (NCES), teachers receive job security, benefits such as workers’ compensation, healthcare, and sick leave, and a solid pension. Their work is universally recognized as such (although their competency and the value of their work are often in question). Teaching work is invisible in very different ways than unpaid home-making,

childrearing, and minimum wage, under-the-table home maintenance. Because of their salaries and protections, they are also less vulnerable than these other populations of workers. In drawing out the overlaps between invisible care in teaching work and other kinds of labor, I don't mean to suggest equivalencies or to diminish the grave conditions under which other workers labor and live.

And yet, some teachers—women, and especially teachers of color, and teachers who work in schools that are considered “under-performing” in terms of student test scores, attendance, and graduation rates—also occupy an “unfortunate convergence of statuses” (Rollins 1985). Their race, gender, ambiguous class status, and affiliation with students of color, poor students, and emerging bilinguals, conspire to devalue their identities and their labor. In this way, particularly in the massive profession of K-12 education (The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that 3.5 million people were employed as full time educators in 2014), in the incredible range of school cultures, policies, gaps and inequities in school and family resources, it is important to see teaching work in context. Teaching is not monolithic. The intersectional experiences of a white teacher at a well-resourced suburban school are distinct from the perspectives of a Latina special education teacher at a “low performing” urban school because specific job requirements, implied expectations, working conditions, and daily routines may be vastly different. Like other forms of labor, invisible teacher work is also constructed across several sites and circumstances: the social position of the teacher, the kind of labor she is engaged in, how that work is compensated, and how easy it is to see. In Table 7, I have mapped some of the overlapping factors that shape teachers' invisible carework including the social status of a teacher's school/ student body, and some examples of carework taken from the teacher participants images and narratives.

Table 7. Visibility and value in teacher work

	<b>TEACHER IDENTITY</b>	<b>LABOR</b>	<b>COMPENSATION</b>	<b>VISIBILITY (LITERAL)</b>	<b>SCHOOL/ STUDENT STATUS</b>
<b>FACTORS THAT SHAPE THE IN/VISIBILITY OF TEACHER WORK</b>	<i>What is the social status of the teacher with regard to race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation, etc.?</i>	<i>What is the particular activity? What is the social status of the work?</i>	<i>How is the (particular) labor compensated? Is the task part of the teacher's job description or evaluated in some fashion?</i>	<i>Does the work take place in school? During school hours? Is the activity observable?</i>	<i>What is the social position of the students and their families (race, class, culture, language, etc.)? What is the perceived quality of the school—is it considered failing, above average, etc.? Where is the school located and what is the perceived stature of the community?</i>
<b>EXAMPLES (OF SITES, TASKS, CONDITIONS, AND IDENTITIES) THAT MAY PRODUCE INVISIBILITY IN TEACHER WORK</b>	Teachers of color; women; LGBT teachers; Immigrant teachers; non-academic teachers (physical education, art, etc.); special education teachers; teachers of young children.	“Women’s work” like caregiving and cleaning; physical labor like organizing the classroom; routinized work such as scripted curricula.	Caregiving and community building work that may not be compensated or evaluated; the non-reimbursed money that teachers invest in extra materials, food, etc. for their students.	Work that takes place after school, on weekends, over the summer and outside of the school building; emotion work and reflection that is interior.	Low wealth students, families, and communities (school location and students’ homes); students of color; immigrant youth and emerging bilinguals; students with disabilities; schools with below average standardized test scores, attendance rates, and graduation rates.

In the case of these teacher/ activists, the in/visibility of their work is intimately tied up with intersectional questions of race, gender, sexuality, language, culture, and class. In addition to the teachers’ own social identities, their work is shaped by the social context of their school and the identities of their students. The ten teachers taught at six different institutions (three among the group taught at the same school, and two pairs each taught at two others). As noted in Chapter

Three, the five urban institutions serve students who are mostly low income (79% to 100%), mostly of color (90% to 99%), and present 4-year graduation rates well below 75%.

The six schools had different cultures, different styles of school leadership, and different missions; one is designed for recently arrived immigrants, another is a transfer school, a third focuses on technology. For all these teachers, part of their job entails showing up each day with and for kids who face layers of adversity on top of the typical trials of adolescence. Some of their students live in poverty and must navigate all the stressors that come with it; some are young people burdened with societal and institutional racism; some have recently immigrated and must learn English; some are returning to school after having dropped out. These dynamics shape many aspects of the teachers' routines, official and unofficial responsibilities, and their ways of seeing their own labor. When they talk and make images about teacher work and invisible work, it is in dialogue with these particular conditions—with the work of teaching at “small schools<sup>54</sup>” in the urban landscape of New York City, teaching mostly Black and Brown students with insufficient economic resources, and, in the wake of neoliberal education policies that punish schools for failure, navigating a moment of profound instability and insecurity for these students, their teachers, and administrators (although you may recall from Chapter Two that one of the teachers, Eli, works at a majority white, well-resourced suburban school. This social context is also reflected in his images and narratives).

In the following chapter, I will draw out and expand on some of the teachers' photos, drawings, and narratives about invisible work. Their images shape, respond to, and resist the social dynamics of race, class, gender and culture in New York City high schools. Like the works of the

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<sup>54</sup> References the “small schools movement” under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, large high schools were broken up into several smaller institutions that share a building.

artists and scholars cited in this chapter, the teachers' stories and images are countervisualities, challenging dominant representations and imaginations of student and teacher identities, teacher work, and the shape of what matters in urban schools.

## CHAPTER 5

### **“IT’S THIS KIND OF PROOF”:**

#### *IMAGING TEACHERS’ INVISIBLE WORK*

Teachers spoke and drew, gathered digital files, and took photos of many different kinds of invisible work. Some of the work was invisible because it is interior—thinking, feeling, planning, reflecting; because it lives outside of the rubricized observations and test score algorithms of teacher and student evaluations; invisible because it is considered fun or pleasurable, and therefore not work; invisible because it takes place outside of the school hours or building; invisible because it is not typically associated with teaching work; and invisible because it is not remunerated.

In this chapter, I will focus in on five teacher-made images of invisible work that arose from different conversations and contexts in my research with the teacher/ activists. In the first part of the chapter I offer a careful visual analysis of these images in dialogue with the teachers’ narratives as a means to consider the particular kinds of invisible work and the dynamics that shape their in/visibility. The second part of the chapter takes up the question, *invisible to whom?* For while certain teacher tasks like helping students secure extra food may not be formally documented or evaluated by school supervisors, they may be keenly recognized by students. Luttrell (2013), for example, has shown the special attention that children pay to teachers’ caring work. Here I trace the sightlines (what is seeable from a situated standpoint) to consider work (both specific tasks and more general categories of work) that is invisible to education policy and administrators; invisible to teachers’ social circles—friends, families, and partners; invisible to a broader public; and finally work that is often invisible to the teachers themselves.



## GRABBING AT EARS

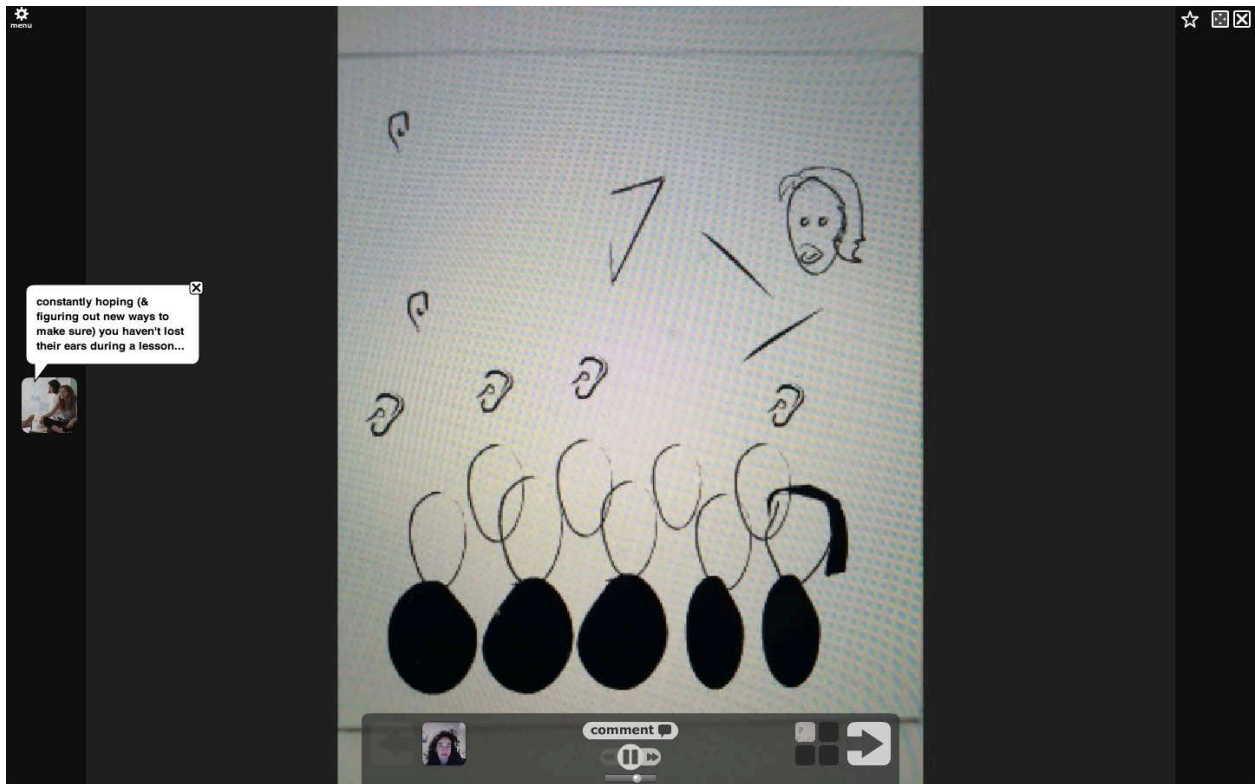


Figure 19. Phoebe's invisible work, grabbing at ears [digital drawing, screenshot]

The first image is a black and white digital drawing made by Phoebe. The pixelated rectangle—a cell phone photograph taken of a computer screen—is rendered with abstract sketchy lines that look to be pen and ink or waxy pencil. Five black egg-shaped blobs line the bottom fifth of the page, each topped with the looped outline of an oval, the shapes just overlapping, like a set of irregular number “eights.” The oval at the right bears the quick, thick strokes of an upside down “L,” like the profile view of a Playmobile wig, the hint that these shapes are meant to be pupils. And between each sketchy circle is another tier of four ovals, students seated in two rows. Just above the cluster of oblong loops, four ears hover at a slight angle. On the left hand side, two more abstract ears, the beginnings of blocky spirals, reach towards the top of the screen. In the upper right corner, a woman’s head with a short wispy bob, two small rings for eyes and an open

mouth (the teacher?), gestures with arms in short strokes, two diagonal lines pointing down and up towards a three-quarters-complete triangle at her right. The effect is a bit like a diagram or visual shorthand—a response to the imperative: *represent a complex idea with the least number of marks*. Off to the left, a small speech bubble balloons up from a thumbnail photograph, Phoebe’s profile picture on the social media platform VoiceThread. The text reads: “constantly hoping (& figuring out new ways to make sure) you haven’t lost their ears during a lesson...”

Phoebe’s drawing was her response to the question, “What do you do in a day that never gets seen or recognized?” We had spoken in our previous group session about teacher’s invisible work and we asked participants to “Create or capture an image of this work and post it online.” In between our workshops, we used the social media platform VoiceThread to continue in-person conversations by posting workshop notes and photos, and to share and comment on digital files around particular themes such as invisible work or to post relevant media on the topic of teacher evaluation. For example, participants uploaded policy documents, articles, and internet-scavenged pictures. This cloud-based application allows users to upload, share, and discuss a wide range of digital files—documents, images, audio files, and videos—and to comment on these posts with text, webcam video, audio recordings, or digital drawings (the comment bar is located in the bottom center of Phoebe’s image). (For additional discussion of VoiceThread limitations and affordances, see Chapter 2).

Phoebe’s image, I later discovered, was not actually a hand-drawn sketch, but a digital piece that she created with a free online tool called “Picassohead” ([picassohead.com](http://picassohead.com)) that invites users to drag and drop elements of Picasso drawings to create their own collages. The application is designed for portraiture and offers categories for different facial features, hair, etc., although Phoebe used it to depict a broader scene with many faces and eyebrow strokes for arms. She did

not say why she used this tool to depict her invisible work (and I traced the drawing to this platform long after our interview), but I wonder if the abstract and somewhat surreal grammar of Picasso's world offered a license to be non-literal and to express a kind of visceral, embodied reflection on her practice. In our interview, she spoke about the image, drawing out links between visual grammar and a hard to describe experience:

It's basically just sort of an abstract or quasi-abstract representation of the teacher as this floating head and arms, pointing to this diagram of a triangle on the board. Then you've got the kids' heads, but then you have these ears floating around the room because you kind of never know, even if they're facing you, whether or not you really are commanding their listening or their attention.

You almost feel ... When I was doing this, and I don't know that you'll get this sense at all, but I kind of did it with this mental image of a teacher facing a classroom and walking around and noticing that occasionally there are little ears floating away from heads, and then trying to grab the ears and stick them back on to the head as they're teaching. You know that slowly you're losing kids' focus every once in a while when they take a second to daydream. You find yourself mentally grabbing at ears.

This work is invisible because it is interior, it is the work of attention, of moving between a teacher's own lesson, agenda, back-of-the-mind-ideas about important subject matter, topics that students might expect to find on the state tests, and a process of "reading the room." It is the work of noticing when a particular student withdraws, when a few students tune out, and when the mood seems to spread and the air shifts, growing slow and heavy or full of nervous energy, jittery knees bouncing, fingers on desks, twirling hair, eyes at the floor, students itching to get out from under the attached laminate arms of their desk-chairs. It is a process of observing, responding, and changing course: Inviting students to stretch, switching the next part of the lesson from lecture to work in pairs, making a joke or pop culture reference. Or perhaps a more active attunement—

“grabbing” and “commanding” attention. Part of what makes this invisible is the hard-to-see quality of learning. As she says, “you kind of never know, even if they’re facing you, whether or not you really are commanding their listening or their attention.” Perhaps when she says this she means that sometimes, it is not clear what students are absorbing, whether they are confused or bored or preoccupied with an out-of-school concern. Or that sometimes, it may take days or weeks or years for new material to “sink in” or resonate for a learner. Or maybe she is alluding to the work that students (girls in particular) do to perform attention, by sitting quietly, nodding at appropriate intervals, or making eye contact (Luttrell 1993; Jones & Myhill 2004).

It is not always possible, and yet monitoring and responding to student engagement is a regular part of teaching. This particular skill and facet of work may be hard to see or mark objectively. A teacher may pick up on the signs of students she knows well—Ana tilting her head slightly, the fact that Mayda has not raised her hand for 20 minutes, Ismael’s lightly tapping toes—and modify the lesson before an outside observer picks up on anything. Like the advice they give to new actors, “the audience won’t see your mistakes, or know if you skipped over a line from the script, stay in character and keep going...” Teachers must make a thousand tiny decisions each day, on the fly, as they’re actively speaking or listening to students. *Only one more question; Miriam, time to switch seats; Let’s put our books away and stand up; I’ll address Jose’s concern tomorrow when we talk about...; Hmm, I hadn’t thought of it that way...* Much of this work is aimed at student response, a kind of double attention (or manifold depending on the size of the class) on both the course content and student engagement.

Later in our interview, Phoebe spoke about “Working to connect with students mentally and putting myself in their shoes,” framing this quality of attention as an empathic kind of emotional work. She said that she related to distracted students, remarking:

I've always gotten the, "You're a dreamer. You're a space cadet." I was always being accused, as a kid, of being not present.

I asked, "Do you feel like that's part of who you are as a teacher, or something you see in students?" Phoebe responded,

It's definitely something that I'm uber-aware of in students because I feel like... There are those moments where, especially with our students, students who come from a variety of demographic backgrounds. A lot of them have multiple other issues that they're juggling within their lives. I just feel like sometimes I know that they're exhausted coming to class. You have those moments where they have reading to do and they want to do the reading, but it's just not necessarily feasible, with all of their other activities and responsibilities, that they're going to get through the whole chapter. I tend to provide notes, and everything else, as a supplement so that they aren't just skimming the book. Then part of that is, 'Well, I want to make this subject matter as concrete for them as possible.' If I can give as much explanation and examples and realness as I can get in class, I try to, but very often that takes the form of... It's discussion, but it's also lecture, and so I find myself stopping every once in a while, or very, very regularly, to ask for understanding. *Do you understand? Are you still here? Is your brain outside? Are you looking at cars? Are you staring out the window?*

I get it. Kids have the exact same mental battle. Everyone procrastinates. It doesn't matter your age or background or whatever. I get that part of the battle, or half of the battle, is drawing them in enough so that they finally find themselves engaged, even if it takes a little bit of work to get there. I just find, as a teacher, I find myself paying attention to that a lot, that very human thing—that we would rather tune out than drive our brains to the water's edge.

Phoebe is “putting herself in their shoes” by remembering the negative messages she received for being distracted (“space cadet”) in school as a young person. Later she connects as an adult, claiming, “I get it. Kids have the exact same mental battle. Everyone procrastinates.” She admits that she still has trouble focusing on work sometimes, thus normalizing the students’ behaviors. She relates to their experiences in a human way, while marking their significant race and class differences. As a privileged white woman from the suburbs, she explains her own disposition to distraction as “part of my personality,” but for the students she attributes it to social factors, to having “multiple other issues that they’re juggling within their lives.” This and her reference to her students’ “variety of demographic backgrounds” alludes to the poor and working class status of her 98% students of color. But rather than stigmatizing the youth as unmotivated or slow, she perceives their distractibility as a nearly universal trait, “that very human thing—that we would rather tune out than drive our brains to the water’s edge.”

For Phoebe, this attention work, the work of “grabbing at ears” is linked with her curricula and pedagogical approach—it takes shape in empathy work; in paying attention; in “making things concrete,” using examples and “realness;” “stopping every once in a while, or very, very regularly, to ask for understanding;” and providing supportive materials like supplemental notes. Some elements of this work might be visible sometimes to an outsider, such as an assistant principal, visiting for a 15-minute “Danielson” observation. Perhaps, if present at the right moments, the Assistant Principal would see Phoebe passing handouts around the room or catch her stopping to check in and “ask for understanding.” However, likely, most of this work would slip by unseen even to a keen observer. Phoebe’s inner monologue, along with the empathy work and the careful reasoning behind her various pedagogical decisions, remains out of sight. Further, the association of teaching with “women’s work,” the emotional nature of the labor, and the social status of her low-wealth students of color, conspire to hide this labor from view.

## A TYPICAL AFTER SCHOOL KIND OF THING

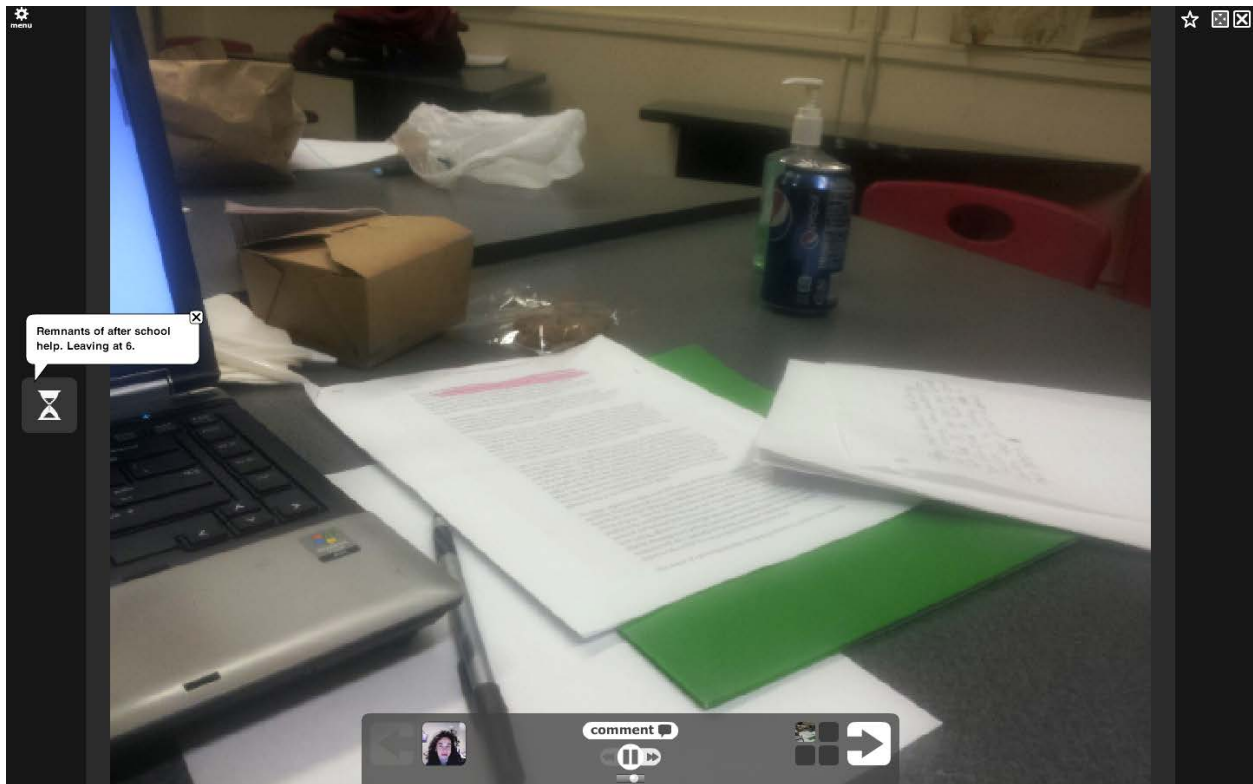


Figure 20. Rebecca's invisible work, afterschool scene [digital photograph, screenshot]

Rebecca referenced a different kind of hard-to-see labor in her image, of after school help (Figure 20). Like Phoebe's, this photograph was her response to a prompt about the teachers' own invisible work and Rebecca posted the image to our VoiceThread group following the same face-to-face discussion. Rebecca's picture is a cellphone photograph taken in the yellow-toned, fluorescent-lit space of her classroom. The image depicts a close-up angle onto her desk, scattered with the tools and necessities of after-school labor. At the far corner of the charcoal laminate table, a pump-bottle of hand sanitizer hides behind a can of Pepsi. A brown cardboard takeout box framed by napkins and plastic utensils to the left and a chocolate cookie in clear packaging to the right seems to be in conversation with bags on an adjoining table—empty white plastic and rumpled brown paper. In the foreground, underneath a skinny isosceles blue triangle

of screen and the keyboard edge of a PC laptop computer, several layers of papers suggest the task at hand. A blank white sheet peeks out from under a black ballpoint pen and kelly green folder, topped with a typewritten handout, the first two lines highlighted in bright pink. At a slant, corners overlapping, a few slightly wavy sheets of white paper lay under a lined loose-leaf sheet on which text in handwritten pen crosses the first seven lines of the page. The comment bubble to the left reads, “Remnants of after school help. Leaving at 6.”

The angle and scale of the photo positions the viewer in Rebecca’s chair—computer in front, shared assignment between, and loose-leaf draft angled off to the right (near parallel with the bottom edge of the photo) pointing to the place where her student sits. Rather than a survey of the classroom, close-up of the assignment or aerial image of the desk, this picture brings the audience into Rebecca’s work and way of seeing. We look out as if through her eyes.

All the stuff on the desks—the student work, computer, food leftovers and garbage—get at the fullness of her day, the many parts of her work, even after the school day has ended. Sitting in her chair, the viewer feels the weight of this work, of being relied on by students, of responsibilities extending till 6pm and starting up again early the next morning. I see a certain sadness to the image, a lonely quality, the feeling of a long day. “Remnants,” as she writes of relational labor, ordering in and helping students with homework. But once the others have gone, she must clean, pack up, and head home. Or perhaps the remains or the “waste” of the day that are captured in this image speak of the need for replenishment?

Rebecca described the image this way:

This is a typical after school kind of thing. It was the day that we ordered in... My advisory [the non-academic supportive structure of school homeroom] switched and my old



kids were really upset about that. So, we met after school and had a dinner—we ordered food. I think this kid was working on a paper. He was handwriting an essay and this was something from that that they got as a handout, so we were working on it... It [the photo] is just showing the after school—it [the workday] does not end [when school ends]. He is not a student that I see in my class, but the last year and a half, we had advisory and he was someone I always had a good relationship with. He needed help after school. It was just an example, because there are a lot of people that are always helping people after school. It's like you do not see that. They don't always know.

In this excerpt, Rebecca describes after-school work with former students. She ordered dinner and spent time with a group of students who “were really upset about” switching out of her advisory as part of a new cycle. She provided homework help on a class essay to another—“not a student that [she] sees anymore,” but someone she “always had a good relationship with.” She was not then (nor had she ever been) his academic teacher. She mentored him as a member of her advisory group; but that role extended to include homework help and continued even after he was no longer an advisee in her charge.

Rebecca's carework is invisible in a few ways—first, after-school help, which she describes as “typical” both for her and other teachers, is often invisible. She claims, “there are a lot of people that are always helping people after school. It's like you do not see that. They don't always know.” The “you” here seems to refer to her colleagues. For example, when she's sitting in her room, she may not see the other teachers gathered with students in their classrooms and vice versa. When she switches to the pronoun, “they,” she seems to be pointing at the administrators. A sense that “they” do not recognize or appreciate their faculty's extended work hours and commitment. The second layer of invisibility comes from the fact that, by working with former students, and in ways not indicated by her role as advisor (providing academic help or sharing

after school meals), this labor extends beyond the bounds of her job description. This work is invisible to administrators and colleagues as well as a teacher evaluation system that has no frame for the kinds of relationships and interactions that Rebecca depicts here. The notion of value-added measurement suggests that testing can demonstrate the causal relationship between a single teacher and student growth, however, this narrow and evaluative lens ignores the community life of schools and relational work with students that may stretch over time.

Rebecca is a special education teacher and some of her afterschool work involves paid labor on the department of education's Special Education Student Information System (SE SIS), an online database for tracking the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) of students with special education needs. She elaborates on her after-school routines:

I can get paid to stay after to work on the SE SIS stuff and the IEP stuff, but then kids will always come in too. I do not really have an office. There is a kid that comes everyday that asks if he can get in the other room to get any leftover lunches, because he has six brothers and sisters and he takes the food home from the breakfast and lunches. He recently attempted suicide. I was thinking - did I pick up anything? Now I am really extra, giving him more time too. He will come then someone else comes. Sometimes teachers, sometimes colleagues want to talk.

As she says, she gets paid for this after-school work (not invisible), but because she does not have an office, she sits in her classroom. These spatial constraints—Rebecca's lack of office space—are due to a vision of teaching that ends after last period, that neglects the planning, preparatory, evaluation, and relational work that teachers do, a vision of teaching can't/ doesn't include teachers' needs for private workspace. In New York City it may also result from the spatial limitations, and consequent tensions, that have grown around the dynamics of co-locating charter schools within public school buildings. It may also be due to the "small schools" movement, a trend

in public education led by reformers like Bill Gates and then New York City School's Chancellor Joel Klein, to break up large public schools into several smaller institutions that share the original space.<sup>55</sup> For example, the building where Rebecca's school, Clinton Tech, is located was a single high school until 2005, when it was chopped into six smaller schools, a process that has created scarcity and frictions around desirable school space.

For Rebecca, the lack of office space and the public-ness of the classroom where she works, renders her witness to and present for the life of the school after the day has officially ended. It means that she is there when colleagues pass by and want to talk perhaps about struggles with a particular student or something personal. Either way, this social labor of building community and relationships is not counted as "real" work. Being in her classroom afterschool means that she is there to help a student in need secure extra food for his siblings, a situation that she says, she "and only one other person knows about." When she learns that he recently tried to commit suicide, it means that now, she is "really extra, giving him more time too." Extra time, extra food, extra care. I wonder if this emotional work goes unseen because it is considered a "natural" part of her feminine disposition (as opposed to labor) or because her student's race and class location devalue his social worth and worthiness of care in the institutional frames of the school. Finally, perhaps his social context and her support are invisible as well out of a kind of self-preserving denial? That for Rebecca, for colleagues and school structures his pain, poverty, and family challenges are too hard to bear.

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<sup>55</sup> In 2009, in his annual Gates Foundation letter, Bill Gates wrote that after investing more than \$2 billion dollars in grants to small school initiatives, they found that "many of the small schools that we invested in did not improve students' achievement in any significant way" (Strauss 2014). At this point they withdrew funding from small schools, focusing instead on a major teacher evaluation program called Measuring Effective Teaching (2010-2013) which many believed played an influential role in the design of Race to the Top policy guidelines.

IT CREATES THIS VERY LARGE  
DEAD END

Similar discussions of teachers' after-hours efforts were echoed throughout workshops, interviews, and the public art project we developed as a group. As the culmination of our work, we created a participatory Tumblr site entitled, *Those Who Can* (a retort to the popular idiom, "those who can do, those who can't teach"), which asks teachers, "What do you do as an educator that cannot be measured?" and invites them to answer back with videos, texts, or images. We launched the blog and social media project at the 2014 annual conference of the New York

Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE) and solicited drawings, collages, texts, and video-recorded responses from the teachers in attendance.

One "Those Who Can" postcard that follows the theme of after school-work was contributed by Betty, a teacher participant in the ItAG. In thin purple marker her card reads, "The evaluation does not evaluate the parent phone calls made three nights a week until 10pm..." And under the text she has drawn a picture of an old-fashioned rotary telephone, the kind with a heavy plastic receiver and thick curly-q cord mounted on a sturdy trapezoidal base.

The phone is outlined in thick black marker, but pencil lines are visible underneath. The careful, rounded quality of the lettering and image seem to contradict the frustration expressed in the

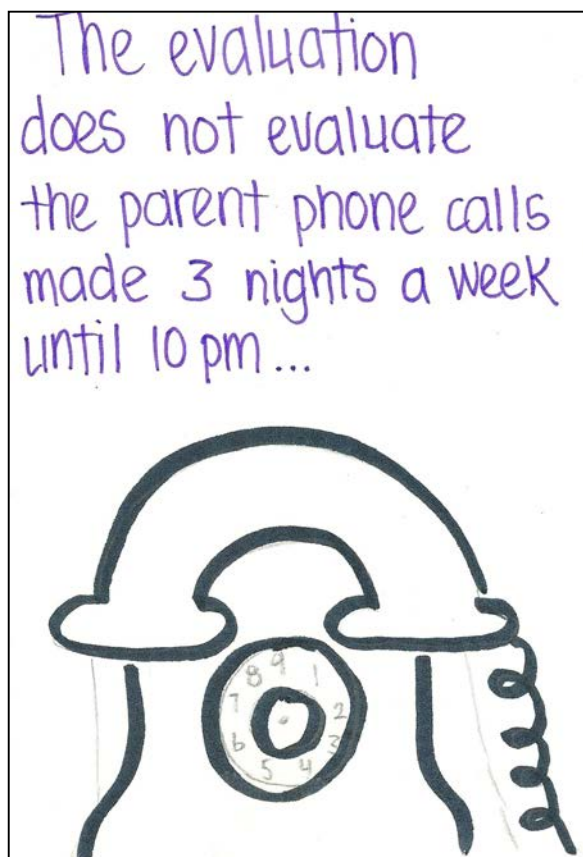


Figure 21. Betty's invisible work, evening phone calls [drawing]

text. The slightly awkward phrasing of the first two lines, “the evaluation does not evaluate,” suggests a definitional negation of terms. *The evaluation doesn't evaluate. Is it even an evaluation?* In the second phrase, Betty calls attention to the time intensity of parent phone calls—“3 nights a week until 10pm.” By specifying the time and frequency of the calls, “3 nights a week” and “until 10pm,” she disrupts a popular belief about teaching work—that it has undemanding (daytime) hours. One of the supposed perks of the job is ending at 3pm each day. But as Betty elaborated in our interview:

Phone calls don't happen during the day. It's one of those things that happen from 8:00-10:00pm, two or three nights a week. That's when parents will answer their phones most likely. Do the phone calls work? Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. It's frustrating when they're like "Did you call the parent?" Yes, I called the parent. The parent didn't answer. It creates this very large dead end.

As Betty explains, phone calls have to take place around parent schedules, and teachers must call when they are “most likely” to pick up their phones. This depiction of parent outreach and evening labor as routine parts of teacher work defies common perception about the hours and kind of work that teachers do. Betty’s school (like the schools of all the teacher participants except Eli’s Shoreline High School) is a “Title I” school, a designation for institutions that have a high proportion of low-income students and receive supplementary federal funding. As a provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), “Title I” schools are required to implement a Parental Involvement Policy (PIP) in order to receive funds. This may entail special workshops for parents on homework help and parental representation on school decision-making committees, but much of the work is transferred to teachers who are expected to maintain ongoing communication with parents and caregivers, mainly through phone calls. Teachers may call home for any number of reasons, including sharing “success stories” or positive reflections on a child. Typically, however, parental calls are made to report on and strategize around problems such as student absences,

disciplinary issues, academic difficulties, or to inform parents about their child's eligibility for supplementary services (in language or special education).

At Betty's school, a transfer school designed to support students who have dropped out, been pushed out, or struggled with schooling in other ways, the need to make home phone calls may be especially high. The statistics on her school, Bronx Humanities, tell a story of intersecting challenges: 98% of the student body are youth of color, 85% receive free lunch, and only 20% of the students graduate in four years compared with a 69% city-wide average. The three teacher participants at this school spoke of many students who were chronically absent and the not uncommon phenomenon of teaching first period classes to only one or two pupils. In this way, home phone calls function as a hidden tax on teachers who work at schools that serve historically-marginalized populations.

In addition to the time parental phone calls require, Betty expresses frustration with their efficacy. She asks rhetorically, "Do the phone calls work?" And answers back, "Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't." I am not sure what Betty means here when she says that the calls sometimes do and sometimes do not work. Does working mean that an absent child returns to school? That a student with special needs receives appropriate services? That disciplinary issues resolve or improve? Or do phone calls "work" when someone picks up at the other end? When two adults are able to talk together about the interests of a young person? The distress Betty communicates seems to be bigger than the time it takes from 8pm-10pm several nights a week. She says, "It's frustrating when they're like 'Did you call the parent?' Yes, I called the parent." The "they" refers to school administration. When she replies in an exasperated tone, emphasizing the word "yes," she seems to be expressing frustration that both this is all she can do to help a struggling student and that "they" (administrators, society, although expressly not the parents) expect her to do

more. She bears the weight of her impotence—not being able to cross that “very large dead end,” coming to the limits of what she can do and how she can help. A phone call is such a small measure against the entrenched poverty, racism, and stigma that so many of her students and their families face, and sometimes not even that is possible. Against this disappointment with social structures, the student, the family, and herself, the words and attitudes of her supervisors and society suggest that she is somehow expected to push beyond these barriers and is culpable for her failure to reach the student, or get a caregiver to return her call.

Betty describes the parental call logs—documents that note the date, time, and summary of a teacher’s calls to her students’ parents—as “a kind of proof” of her efforts. She uses the word (in noun and verb form) repeatedly in a few sentences:

That's another thing, keeping the logs. I knew this year especially, I'm up for tenure. You have to have logs. You have to prove why this girl has been out of your class because she gave birth during your class. You need to prove it wasn't you who caused her to not be there. You made the phone calls. The phone calls are used to prove... it's this kind of proof.

I had one girl who was stuck in the Dominican Republic. Something with her visa was weird. She didn't come to any day of my class. Handing in my tenure stuff, she was on my class list and she dragged down my pass rate. She was stuck in the Dominican Republic. There was nothing I could do. She is still in my pass rate<sup>56</sup>. It's like "Well, did you call home?" Yeah, I called home. They told me she was stuck in the Dominican Republic. The phone log says one time. They're going to go "How come you only called once in 5 weeks?" Well, she was still stuck there.

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<sup>56</sup> This term refers to the proportion of a teacher’s students who pass Regents exams and other standardized tests. In New York City, a teacher’s “pass rate,” is factored into tenure decisions.

The burden to prove her effort, commitment, time, and care seems to reflect a lack of trust in her work and intentions, suspicion on the part of administrators. She says, “You need [to] prove it wasn't you who caused her to not be there,” as if the default assumption, even for immigration troubles or the birth of a child, allocates responsibility to the teacher, as though she's presumed guilty. Her narratives of the two absent students, first the one who had a baby, and second the girl who was “stuck in the Dominican Republic,” reflect misalignments between school evaluation structures and the lives of her pupils. The absurdity that a teacher's “pass rate” incorporates a student who never once attended her class points to a system that cannot conceive of the circumstances Betty describes—that some students might be immigrants and might have “visa issues,” or that a high schooler might go into labor during fourth period algebra. The shape of the evaluation constructs certain norms around students' lives and identities. Betty, as a teacher of students that do not conform to those standards, shoulders an extra burden of proof along with the work of re-representing her students' narratives and her own efforts to follow the school and policy frameworks.

Sarah, another teacher at Bronx Humanities who was present at the interview, joined the discussion on the subject of call logs. Recognizing Betty's visible frustration with the logs, Sarah waited for a beat once she had finished speaking. Then, in a low voice, eyebrows slightly arched and the left side of her mouth raised in sympathy, she said:

We talk about invisible work. Danielson is trying to make the stuff we talk about visible. We know that it's hard to call parents during the school day. We're expected to do that. You turn in your parent call log and it has time stamps of 9 pm or 5 pm or whatever. It's making it visible. But a lot of monitoring seems to have come with it. That's difficult.

Here Sarah acknowledges that part of the function of this work, especially the documentation of parental phone calls, is to make teachers' work visible. To give teachers “credit” for their time



with parents and after-hours responsibilities. But as she says, “a lot of monitoring seems to have come with it.” By monitoring she may be referring to scrutiny from administrators, that the teachers’ work is being closely studied; or to the kind of documentation (and extra paper work) that the teachers are required to complete, monitoring themselves and their students; or perhaps to other forms of tracking that go along with new evaluation frameworks such as regular classroom observations. Monitoring is an integral part of the neoliberal school, and Sarah reminds us that visibility and invisibility are not inherently good or bad. Visibility in the form of monitoring may come with its own set of burdens, and the discourse around teachers’ invisible labor takes place alongside dynamics of hypervisibility in the form of school surveillance.

What Michael Apple (2005) calls school “audit culture” is a movement marked by the massive documentation of student and teacher data, and the visualization and publication of this data online and in the media. Combined with zero tolerance disciplinary policies, metal detectors, and cameras, neoliberal schools are spaces of hypervisibility, surveillance and monitoring especially of historically-marginalized youth of color and their teachers. Thus the dynamics of in/visibility are played out in the context of education policy, school culture, and social relationships (for example between administration and teachers, teachers and students, etc.) that shape the ways in which they are understood, felt, and received.

## LIKE A FORM OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS THE TEACHER

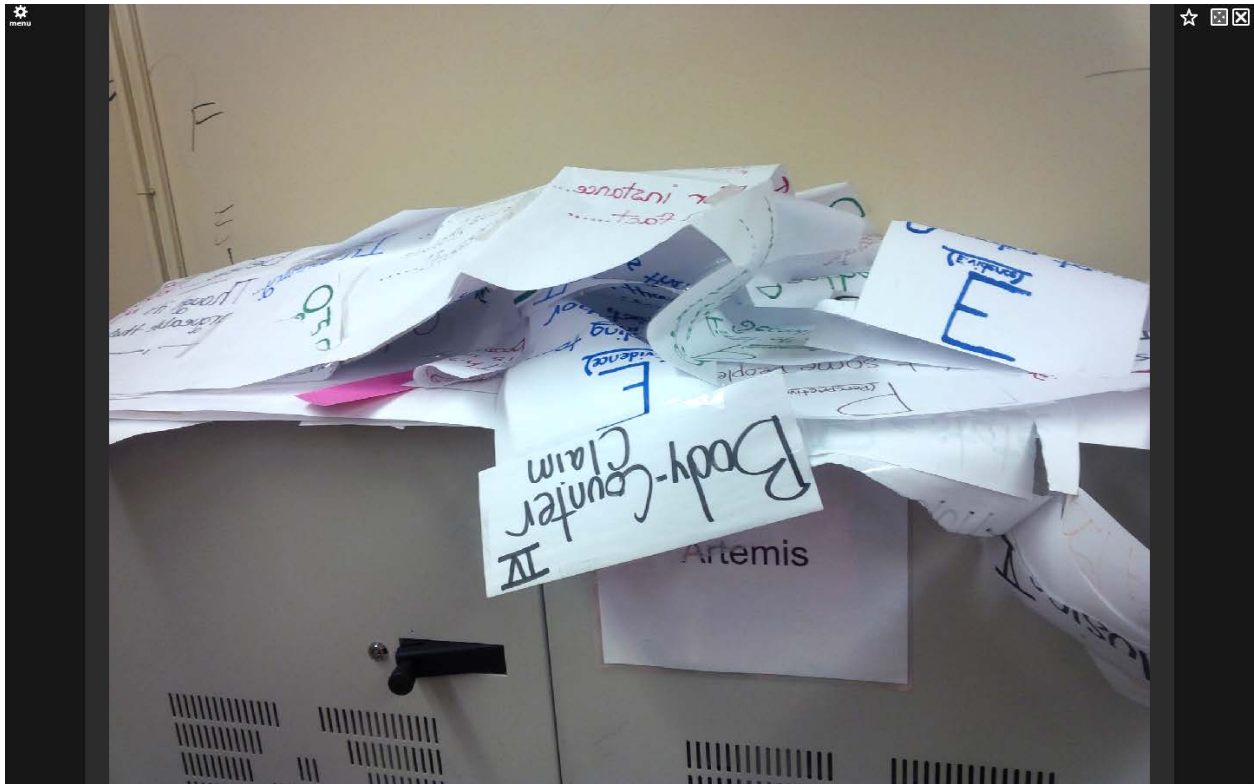


Figure 22. Lee's invisible work, "Destroyed Teacher Work" [digital photograph, screenshot]

The next image of invisible teacher work is a photograph submitted by Lee to our VoiceThread group. The image in Figure 22 depicts a crumpled pile of white paper heaped atop a grey plastic surface (a copy machine? Printer?), hung with a white laminated label marked "Artemis." Like a kind of still life, the heap is set against a dirty-ish beige wall, the letters "F" and "E" scratched vertically in black felt tip at the left. The white papers above a small strip of neon pink card stock are joined at the seams with shiny clear tape and reveal careful handwritten lettering in different colored markers—royal blue, black, green, and red. Some of the text is legible—an upside down rectangle at the front that reads, "IV Body- Counter Claim<sup>57</sup>," in thick black marker

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<sup>57</sup> The concept of the "counterclaim" (in dialogue with the writer's central claims) is part of the structure of an argumentative essay—what the opposition might say. This approach to teaching writing is supported by the Common Core State Standards.

and two bright blue capital “E’s” with the word “evidence” between parentheses marked in small letters below. But most of the lettering is hard to make out. Papers are folded over and upside down, creased, curled, and ripped. The unwieldiness of the crumpled pile, which appears to stretch several arm lengths across, brings to mind the awkward work of assembling and putting it up—laying the smaller papers next to each other and carefully taping, asking a student to hold up the left side while another affixes tape to the middle, standing back to make sure it is level. When Lee posted the photo online, she titled the image “Destroyed Teacher Work.” In the description for her post she wrote, “I created a beautiful Writing Tips wall for the bilingual population of the school. Hand written in colors. My invisible work destroyed.” When she came upon this image while flipping through a stack of pictures during our photo-elicitation interview, she took a deep breath and let out a sigh. Looking down at the photo she said:

I hate this picture, do you understand? No, I love it and I hate it. I remember putting this up... What I did was I created a bilingual writing wall for the students on how to do introduction, the body, and conclusion. One day I stayed after school until, like, five in the— But you know what? I loved doing this, because I knew it had a purpose. Right? It had a purpose. It was beautifully done. I put it up. I had my advisory kids help me put it up.

So comes Regents week<sup>58</sup>, and it was a Friday, and I was about to leave at 6:00 at night. And I told the AP [Assistant Principal], ‘I’m going to leave now.’ He was like, ‘Oh, you know, it’s Regents week next week.’ I said, ‘Yeah. I took down most of the stuff.’ Because I already knew, and I said, ‘But the only thing that is up is a bilingual wall.’ He said, ‘Don’t worry. We’re going to cover that.’

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<sup>58</sup> Regents exams are New York State standardized tests for high school students. In order to graduate from high school, students must pass Regents Exams in five subjects. and “Regents week” refers to a week of the school year that is set aside for Regents testing.

Lee sets up the image and the accompanying narrative, by saying “I hate this picture,” and then correcting herself, “No, I love it and I hate it.” She makes a similar rhetorical move two lines down when she speaks about staying after school to complete the writing wall. She starts, “One day I stayed after school until, like, five in the—” and she stops herself again, as if she were about to complain about long hours, to frame the project as a burden, but decides against it, offering a different interpretation. She continues, “But you know what? I loved doing this, because I knew it had a purpose. Right? It had a purpose. It was beautifully done.” By saying that she loves the picture, that the work had purpose, and that she loved doing it, Lee is affirming the value of her labor—her time, pedagogy, and expertise (“it was beautifully done”) to me (as educational colleague, scholar) and to herself. As she goes on in the story, she points again to her skill and experience as a veteran teacher by outlining the discussion she had with her Assistant Principal (AP) at 6pm on the prior Friday (also after-hours time). After he reminds her that next week is Regents week, she replies, “‘Yeah. I took down most of the stuff.’ Because I already knew.” In her fifteenth year in the classroom, she is familiar with the rhythms and routines of Regents week and the rules that require educational materials be taken down or covered up during test-taking.

Lee carries on with the story:

So comes Monday, I see this. It hurt me. I was devastated. I was devastated because I put time, energy, I put a lot of love and thought into this, you know? And it was for the kids. This wasn't for me. *Para los niños* [for the children]. All of this for a fucking test. It really hurt me. It hurt me so, so much, because you didn't think about the teacher. You didn't think about the time that I put into it. You didn't even think about the students. You just thought that taking it down, bringing it down was the right thing to do, was your job to do, which you could have covered up because you told me you were going to cover it up. But the person didn't.

As Lee recounts her response, she is visibly upset—words coming faster, eyes shiny—and talks about her reaction in deeply emotional terms: “It hurt me. I was devastated.” She explains this emotional upset in a few ways. First she enumerates the dimensions of her work—time, energy, love, and thought to show the layers of labor that she contributed, and what the project represented to her. Next she makes clear the purpose she alluded to above: “it was for the kids.” And as if to emphasize which kids it was for, she says it again in Spanish, “*para los niños*.” This was a bilingual writing wall, an informative poster on the structure of argumentative essays, written in both Spanish and English. Because as Lee had informed me, “there was a board in English,” created by another teacher, “but nothing for the bilinguals, so I made this.”

As a Boricua, native Spanish speaker and Spanish teacher, Lee is one of the few advocates for bilingual students at her school. She is also one of only two Latinx faculty members at an institution with a student body comprised of 59% Latinx and 9% emergent bilinguals. She created this wall for a group of students who are under-represented in the power structures of the school and society at large, and who are generally underserved by a school system and testing culture that views immigrant students and “English Language Learners” through a deficit lens. Linguistic practices of emergent bilinguals such as translanguaging or the “strategic employment of multiple semiotic resources to act, to know and to be” (Garcia, 2014) are viewed as evidence of inadequacy. And the label of “English Language Learner,” itself calls out absences, framing student identities as lacking, as opposed to Garcia’s term “emergent bilingual” which foregrounds student strengths and capacities. As Flores (2016) writes, the term English Language Learner, “reflects a raciolinguistic ideology that positions these students as deficient while a white student who engages in similar bilingual language practices would be categorized as linguistically gifted.” Flores’ raciolinguistic analysis demands that we see the categories of race and language as interconnected. In the case of Lee’s image and narrative, they are indeed intertwined. The

tearing down of her writing wall and the devaluing of her time and work may also reflect a diminishment of her as a Latina, and of her students, particularly those bilinguals and emergent bilinguals that this wall was meant to support.

Another part of Lee's sadness is about feeling invisible to her supervisor and perhaps to the broader school culture and structure. She says, "It hurt me so, so much, because you didn't think about the teacher. You didn't think about the time that I put into it. You didn't even think about the students." The "you" here refers to her Assistant Principal. Although Lee is never 100% sure of who "ripped down" her work or how directions were communicated, she attributes blame to the AP perhaps because of broader school dynamics, past experiences, or as a stand-in for school accountability. She feels that her work, her time, and the best interests of her students do not register for him and by using the pronoun "you," she speaks back directly to the AP as she speaks to me—signaling both her outrage and resistance. Lee's work is intertwined with the students—she makes this writing wall with her advisees and for her bilingual students—and she loves doing the work because of the purpose it serves for them. Whereas Lee's welfare, the intentions of her work, and her sense of invisibility are tied up with her students, her AP seems to be off on his own. She understands his purpose in taking the writing wall down, and perhaps more generally in terms of a bureaucratic vision of duty and as detached from the needs and aims of teachers and students. She says, "You just thought that...bringing it down was the right thing to do, was your job to do." Here Lee seems to be saying that he misinterprets the scope and meaning of his job. That he understands his work in terms of following directives, a black and white take on what is right, and not in relation to broader objectives like supporting teachers or student learning. Lee links this incident and the AP's priorities with high-stakes testing—as she says later, "*Todo por un examen* [all this for a test]." It looks like he ranks the rules and aims of standardized testing, a system that Lee is highly critical of, above her and above the wellbeing of students. In contrast to

Lee's vision of her own work, one that goes beyond the hours and on-paper obligations of her title, and is driven by care for students, the actions of her AP reflect carelessness and a narrow, instrumental interpretation of his role.

As we continued to talk, I asked Lee specifically about the emotions that were coming up for her as she looked at the piece. She replied, tentatively at first:

It brings up, maybe I'm being too dramatic, *pero* it's like a violence toward the teachers. It's not domestic violence, because it's not at a home, but it's like, how can I call that? Institutional violence towards the teacher. "I'm coming into the classroom and just ripping shit down." I took it that way, you know? I took it like a form of violence towards the teacher. That's the way I took it, but I could be *exagerada* [exaggerating], but that's just the way I feel.

It just makes me so sad, because I know that in my other school, this would not happen, and that's why I know that good schools exist. [I know that] Good schools exist, and good principals exist, and awesome teachers exist because of that. But these things just, *no me merecen*. They don't deserve me, you know? That's where I'm at with this. It's so sad, right? It's fucked up. It goes with emotional justice, you know? Like the shit that us teachers have to go through, and we can't—we got to be the professional ones and take it in. It's fucked up. It's so fucked up.

These are strong words—*institutional violence*, *no me merecen* (*they don't deserve me*), *emotional justice*, *fucked up*. When she is searching for a way to put this experience into language, wrangling with linguistic incongruence (DeVault 1990), she says first, "It's not domestic violence," because they are not in a home context, but she aligns the experience with a form of abuse. When she describes what happened as "Ripping shit down," she envisions the act of taking down

her wall as aggressive and fierce<sup>59</sup>. She settles on “institutional violence” as a descriptor, language that references both the place in which the violence occurs—the institutional setting of the school, and also the scale and power structures that support the behavior. In the literature, the phrases “institutional violence” or “structural violence” (the terms are used interchangeably) describe “arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way... The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people” (Farmer, 2006). Like the concept of institutional racism, institutional violence suggests injustice and harm at the scale of social institutions, and responsibility that extends beyond specific perpetrators to include cultural ideology, policy and social systems. This meaning is also reflected in Lee’s narrative. Although she locates culpability with the Assistant Principal, this incident is about the value systems and power channels that he represents. His actions reflect the agenda of neoliberal schooling that prioritizes high-stakes testing, devalues teachers’ “soft” labor, and marks emergent bilingual students—who often struggle with standardized tests that are not designed for them culturally or linguistically—as deficient.

Lee also positions this incident in a broader context. She speaks about her experience at a previous school saying, “It just makes me so sad, because I know that in my other school this would not happen, and that’s why I know that good schools exist.” She references her prior experience as if to underscore the wrongdoing, to say, “this didn’t have to happen,” but also to preserve her optimism and passion for social justice education. “Good schools exist, and good principals exist, and awesome teachers exist.” This specific negative experience does not discount the great work

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<sup>59</sup> This action bears traces of “settler colonialism” a process of territorial occupation of indigenous land. Patrick Wolfe (2006, p.388) writes that “Settler colonialism destroys to replace,” a dynamic that resonates in the removal of Lee’s wall—a symbol of classroom culture, her own culture, and the cultures of her Latinx and bilingual students—in favor of the aesthetic and cultural values of Regents testing.



taking place in other corners of the school system. In numerous places she makes sense of her experience in terms of an action against “teachers” (plural) or “the teacher” (a general figure). She may be using this language as opposed to first person to distance herself from the difficult emotions this story brings up, but I suspect another reason too. Lee is an education activist—she is a core organizing member of NYCoRE and she references her activism frequently. When she talks about “a violence towards the teachers,” she is joining her own experience with the experiences of her colleagues. When she aligns “institutional violence” with “emotional justice,” she reframes her sadness in solidarity with other teachers and in terms of a social struggle for better conditions. She is not alone in this upsetting incident, but united with fellow teachers, and a broader public of women and People of Color who are restricted from showing anger, who have “to be the professional ones and take it in.” Lee refuses to take it in or to accept her AP’s devaluation of her work, asserting, “*No me merecen. They don’t deserve me.*” Despite her hurt, her feelings of invisibility and experience of systemic violence, she works to maintain her dignity and sense of self-worth.

Other teachers had strong reactions to the image. Betty said, “I would cry so, so hard if this happened to me. I think I would be in hysterics crying.” She went on to describe her own challenges in creating class bulletin boards, and the ways they are both rigidly evaluated and devalued by administrators. Eli, having missed the session when we discussed Lee’s image, had a different interpretation. He chose this photograph to speak about during our image elicitation interview and began with great enthusiasm:

I love this piece. This is an awesome piece. It manages to not only be a beautiful, candid slice of life and something that is... it couldn’t be more of just a ubiquitous kind of prosaic moment in... every teacher’s seen the pile of shit on the counter or wheely cart or whatever this is. I love that this is both trash and also absolute treasure. First of all, “body

counterclaim” may be the most complicated of all the kinds of cognitive strategies we try to teach high school kids—that you can hold two ideas in your head at the same time. Two opposing... it’s just gorgeous. This is evidence written the right way and this is the bleed through so it’s backwards so it’s the negative inverse...

It just speaks to how big the ideas are that we work on and how lasting and ancient the practice of our gig is... Anyway I just was really moved by that. I just feel like built around this that it’s 5:52pm and the teacher takes this picture and is like, oh shit I have to get out of here but I probably could grade for another hour and a half and miss the rush hour crap anyway and I’ll just have dinner at 8:00 or 8:30 because that’s what we do. That’s such a snapshot of a classic teacher’s gig. It could also very well be moments after class. It could be in the morning.

Eli engages the image with visual acuity—noticing and thinking, making connections as he speaks. He hones in on details, reading the hard-to-make-out text—words printed upside down and backwards. He finds accidental visual metaphors. For example, he links the two representations of “evidence,” one “written the right way,” and the other the “negative inverse,” to the concept of “body counterclaim” which he defines as the principle that “you can hold two [opposing] ideas in your head at the same time.” Eli picks up on dynamics in the image: the simultaneous “trash and also absolute treasure” that echoes Lee’s “No, I love it and I hate it.” He sees layers in the photo that probably are not available to non-classroom teachers—the phrases she has written about (body counter claim and evidence), the everyday quality of the image, and the back-stories that he posits about how this snapshot fits into the teacher’s day and train of thought. Eli connects with the picture as a veteran teacher himself, an insider relishing the details and familiar visual grammar of teaching culture. The image, for Eli, is testament to the importance of teaching work,

a visual melding of the prosaic and profound. As he says, “It just speaks to how big the ideas are that we work on and how lasting and ancient the practice of our gig is.”

I remind Eli that the image was posted in response to a prompt about teachers’ invisible work and ask him how he thought the picture might speak to the concept of invisible labor. With barely a pause, Eli conjures a fictional history of the picture, narrating back through all of the work suggested in the photograph. Calling the hypothetical teacher, “Susan,” he traces the life of the image in reverse—imagining her analysis post-activity, backwards through class time, and a days-long process of preparation. He explains:

There’s Susan at the end of class and then we go through class in reverse where she is complimenting kids and correcting kids and boosting them up or taking moments to direct and say, ‘Alright here’s what you’re doing and it’s really good. Hey everybody, look at what was good about...’ And then we go back even further and then she’s rolling out the instructions and telling them, okay here’s what’s expected of you.

Eli continues back, recounting “Susan’s” mental checklist, “Do I have the markers? Do I have the paper? Do I have the tape?” And further still, to several days prior when she is negotiating with fellow teacher “Kitty” to “borrow puncture paper,” and making a trip to Staples for the necessary markers. He goes on:

Here’s the thing. There’s no points, there’s no thanks, there’s no anything. Nothing happens for all of that forethought and the work that it took to get there. Let alone constructing all of the scaffolding that took them to this place where the kids are running on this, they’re owning it, investing in it. And then all of the stuff that’ll happen after—when Susan will hopefully reflect on how well it went, how she could tweak things better.

In terms of the invisible work, again what the kids see and what the parents see and what other teachers see and even sometimes what we allow ourselves to see in ourselves rarely includes how freaking' hard it is to create the 40 minutes of magic time that will end up in a pile of soon-to-be trash. It's awesome!

Eli looks at this crumpled heap of paper and as if with special x-ray teacher goggles, envisions the preceding days of work, a sort of preparatory prologue. Eli imagines the papers to be remnants of a lesson plan, a project created collaboratively with students during a 40-minute class period. He reminds us of the “scaffolding” work she must do to prepare students for the lesson and later the reflective work of assessing, “how well it went, how she could tweak things better” when she teaches the lesson again. When Eli looks at this photo, he readily imagines the teacher behind it, the intellectual labor required, the planning and purchase of materials (with her own money?), the relational work with students, and her subsequent reflective practice. He views the image with a mix of recognition, affinity, and esteem. Although Eli guesses incorrectly about the purpose of Lee's project, his narrative reflects a considered attempt to make the teacher's hard-to-see work visible and his interpretation locates his angle of vision on teacher labor as an insider and teacher advocate.

Eli recognizes that much of this work is invisible to “kids,” “parents,” “other teachers,” and sometimes “ourselves” (teachers reflecting on their own practice). He cites the lack of acknowledgement for this kind of labor, conceding, “Here's the thing. There's no points, there's no thanks, there's no anything. Nothing happens for all of that forethought and work that it took to even get there.” But he seems to find a sort of Zen beauty to its impermanence—the fact that “40 minutes of magic” becomes “soon-to-be trash.” As he says, “it's awesome.” Rather than a case of relentless optimism, I think Eli's appreciation of the ephemerality of this teacher's materials is grounded in his reverence for the profession, “how lasting and ancient” it is. Although the traces of

a lesson—student work, worksheets, posters—may end up in a pile after a single class period, the impact of the work has a longer life in and through students.

While Eli's interpretation of Lee's image conveys recognition and respect for the teacher's work, the tonal gap between the story he constructs and Lee's own narrative is striking. It is not surprising that the backstory to Lee's photograph is opaque to him even as an experienced classroom teacher.<sup>60</sup> However, I wonder if some of the space between his interpretation and Lee's experience derives from their social identities, he as a white cisgender male and she a bilingual Latina; or perhaps from the distinct social locations of their schools and student bodies. Does Eli's experience as a teacher at a majority white, privileged suburban high school make this incident or Lee's broader experiences of institutional violence at an urban school that serves primarily low-wealth students of color harder to imagine? Regardless of the answer, I think the distance between Eli's reading and Lee's experience is symbolic of the disparities of wealth, resources, social expectations and support across the public education system. And further, how those disparities are differently lived and felt in the work and lives, hearts, brains and bodies of public school teachers.

### **IN/VISIBLE TO WHOM?**

These examples of teacher work raise questions of sight and status across the categories of student/ school identities, teacher identity, type of labor, compensation, and physical visibility. But the object of this in/visibility is left open. Who is meant to be seeing and taking note of teacher work? In most of the cases above, the teachers reference administrators (a stand in for systemic power?) as the "you" or "they" who neglect to recognize their work, although Rebecca talked

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<sup>60</sup> Betty, who was present for the discussion of Lee's image, also interpreted the meaning through her own lens, imagining the writing wall to be a public bulletin board, the content and structure of which is determined by the Department of Education.

about work being invisible to teacher colleagues, and Eli referenced parents and students as well. In other stories and images, teachers talked more explicitly about the ways in which their work is invisible to other groups of people. Part of the experience of invisibility is feeling misunderstood or abused as Lee described in a kind of symmetry with her work being “trashed”. In addition to administrators, teachers talked about their work being poorly understood by policy structures (the new Advance Teacher Evaluation Policy in particular), and feeling that their work was invisible to their social circles, to a broader public and even sometimes to themselves.

## IT DOESN'T MATCH

### *invisible to “danielson”*

When Betty talked about the call logs and the way that her “pass rate” would include a student who had never once attended class because she was stuck in the Dominican Republic due to visa issues, she highlighted an incongruity between teacher evaluation (in this case for tenure) and the lives of her students. The teacher/activists spoke about many such misalignments—ways that education policy and the new Advance Teacher Evaluation system in particular overlooked the conditions of their schools and students’ lives. For example Nisha and V often spoke about the incongruity of standardized testing and the Danielson framework for their work with recently arrived immigrants and emergent bilinguals. They work at a school where all of the students have come to the United States within the last four years and all are emergent bilinguals with varying English proficiency (86% are characterized as ELLs). During one discussion about how Danielson was being interpreted at the teachers’ schools, Nisha remarked:

Looking at Danielson, it’s like, it’s as if my kids don’t exist and my practice doesn’t exist. People give specific anecdotes and it has nothing to do with what good teaching for my students looks like, absolutely nothing.

Serving a uniquely concentrated population of youth with particular learning needs (e.g. language learning integrated with content), Nisha feels that she and her students are overlooked by evaluation policies that present native English speakers as the (unspoken) norm. The pedagogical skills she works to hone such as curricular alignment across subject areas, project-based learning, and interactive multimedia activities—critical for students learning a new culture and language—are absent from the framework that New York City adopted to evaluate her practice.

This misalignment between teacher practice and teacher evaluation came up again during another workshop. We had invited the teacher/activists to write down questions about the new evaluation policy in small speech bubbles and post them around the room. Then participants chose a question to address and we spoke about them as a group. One of Lee's questions was "How is a teacher in multiple classrooms able to be evaluated effective or highly effective in developing classroom structure?" She explained, "Well the reason why I posed that question is because it's the first time in my career that that has ever happened to me, to be in five classrooms. And it's happening to me during this time of the new evaluation system."

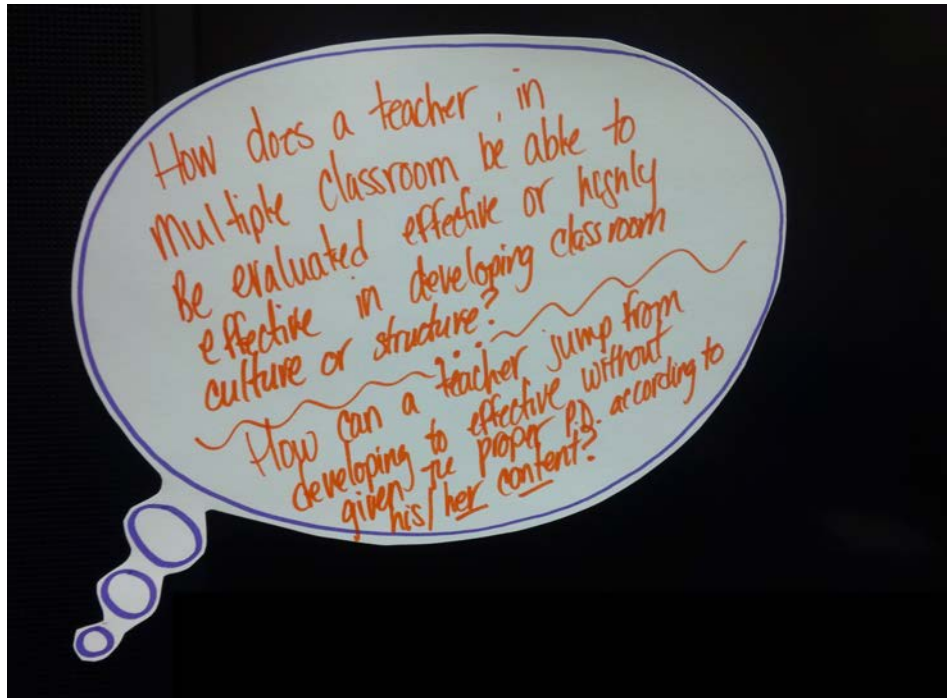


Figure 23. Lee's questions (multiple classrooms) [digital photograph]

It took a few minutes of dialogue between Lee and other teachers for me to fully grasp the question and the set of circumstances that Lee was alluding to. As other teachers like Nisha and Sarah shared similar experiences, I began to piece it together: Lee did not have a permanent classroom. So whereas typically, a teacher stays in place and high school students move between rooms throughout the day as they travel to different class subjects, Lee also travels. This means that she has to carry all the materials she needs—student work, texts, media, art supplies—with her from room to room (five different classrooms in all). It also means that she does not have a home base, a place with all of her stuff, a room that she has decorated to her liking or that contains the teacher's custom set of visual aids like posters, vocabulary words, and maps.

Lee's question is how a teacher in her position can be "evaluated effective or highly effective in developing classroom structure?" Here Lee is alluding to Charlotte Danielson's "Framework for Teaching," (2013) which New York City implemented as part of the Advance Teacher Evaluation



policy the same year. Under Advance, teachers are evaluated on a scale from “highly effective” to “ineffective” based on a series of classroom observations guided by the Danielson framework and students’ value-added test scores. In the Danielson framework, the practice of teaching is divided into 22 components and grouped under 4 domains:

- Domain 1: Planning and Preparation
- Domain 2: The Classroom Environment
- Domain 3: Instruction
- Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

When Lee references “developing classroom structure” she is talking about Domain 2: “The Classroom Environment” and specifically sub-domain 2e, “Organizing physical space.” Danielson defines this category in terms of the “Arrangement of furniture and use of physical resources,” further specifying:

Both the physical arrangement of a classroom and the available resources provide opportunities for teachers to advance learning; when these resources are used skillfully, students can engage with the content in a productive manner.

On the ground, this means that teachers are expected to decorate the classroom with student work, hang educational posters, and keep the room tidy. Lee’s question, which feels as much like a protest as an earnest query, is how, given her particular circumstances, can she receive an “effective” rating in sub-domain 2e—somewhat different than the challenge of *being* effective.

Other teachers commiserated and offered advice. Nisha replied:

I’m in a similar situation as a new teacher, which is super fun [said with a sarcastic smile]. But it’s sort of like right now, I’m running around three classrooms with all ELLs [English Language Learners] and so it’s like extra resources, extra stuff, so what am I supposed to do?

Laminate 95 word-walls everyday?<sup>61</sup> And if I'm using technology, I'm pushing a cart with all my shit and then hauling laptops behind me, roaming around during my five-minute passing period.<sup>62</sup> So, I was thinking about this a lot. I've been making adaptations, putting my objectives up on different sticky notes up on my computer that I'm minimizing and projecting, but that's like, not a way to live! You know? (laughing)... Like I have posters hanging off my back when I walk around the school. I'm not even joking.

Nisha's description brings us into the logistics and physical exertions of teaching in this way, "running around three classrooms," with extra resources for emerging bilingual students; of "pushing a cart with all my shit and then hauling laptops behind me, roaming around during my five-minute passing period;" of walking around the school with "posters hanging off my back." In her descriptions we can feel the tenuous balance of navigating a media cart through hallways packed with teens, of arriving to class in a rush, a little sweaty, the vague embarrassment of walking around with posters on her back like the sandwich boards of a street corner salesperson. She assures the group that she is adjusting to the circumstances, "making adaptations," by writing her class objectives on her computer in advance rather than on the board, but that it's "not a way to live!" Nisha's narrative unfurls all the furious behind-the-scenes activity that her teaching labor demands—layers of invisible work that she recognizes as fundamentally unsustainable.

As discussed earlier in relation to Rebecca's lack of office space, the reason why so many New York City teachers no longer have their own classrooms is due to the spatial pressures exerted by co-location, the practice of housing multiple schools within a single building. This space-sharing arrangement gained popularity in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the small schools

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<sup>61</sup> A Word Wall is an interactive classroom display that includes relevant vocabulary words or topics, used to teach spelling, grammar, or reading/ writing strategies.

<sup>62</sup> Passing periods are the short breaks between class periods when both students and teachers can use the restroom, gather supplies, and prepare for the next class.

movement that reorganized large public high schools into many smaller institutions under one roof. More recently, tensions have intensified as newly established charter schools (often backed by corporate funders) take up residence in public school buildings. The logistics of sharing spaces like hallways, gyms, and cafeterias can be complicated for multiple schools, and all kinds of equity issues arise when schools with different student populations and funding streams must compete for resources. A group of anonymous teachers at a public school in Brooklyn created the Tumblr account [Inside Colocation](#) (printed without the standard hyphen) to chronicle all the issues that arise when a charter moves into a building that already houses three schools. They write, “Most people don’t know what a colocation looks like, or how it impacts the existing school community.” They created the blog to “document the process” and posted annotated photos from January 2012 to September 2015 that compare facility bathrooms, signage, and school lunches. The images in Figure 24, sketched out in marker (at right) and color-coded bar graphs (left), show how the allocation of space within the school building shifted over a three-year period. Each horizontal line represents a floor of the school and we can see how the turquoise and green lines shrink and divide from year to year while the red blocks grow longer and higher.

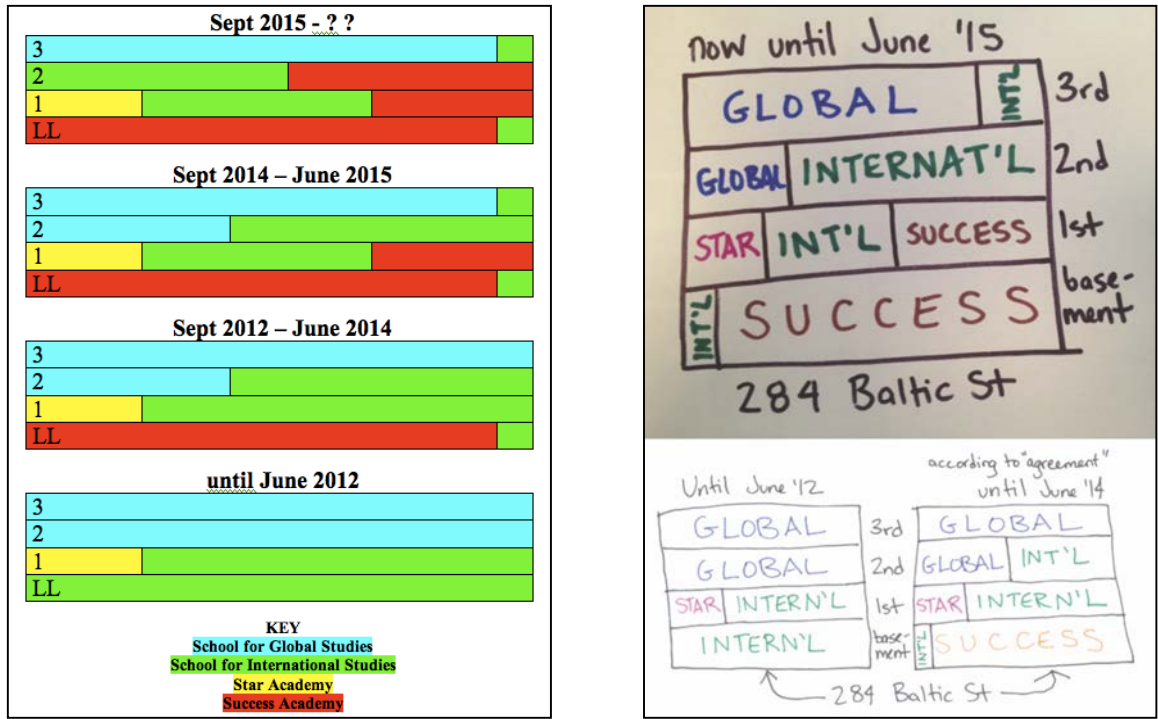


Figure 24. Space allocation by school and year, Inside Colocation

Notes on the blog explain that Success Academy received a floor previously used to teach 300 students and used it for a school of about 60. Each year the charter school obtained more classrooms even as the original public schools' enrollments increased. The charter school got air conditioners, bathroom renovations, and technology upgrades that the existing schools did not, a fairly common phenomenon that the NAACP has said creates schools that are "separate and unequal" (2010).

Under a photo of classroom doors recently taken over by Success Academy, the bloggers write:

Our Earth Science teacher teaches in four different classrooms—making it impossible to create any kind of rich classroom environment for his content. Not only that, but his students don't even have class in the same room every day, making for a very confusing schedule.

With our limited space, there is no other option. Believe me, we tried."

Here the teacher-bloggers document the effects of co-location on the life and practice of a particular teacher—a science teacher who must travel to four different classrooms. While charter co-location is often discussed in progressive education circles in terms of unequal resource allocation and over-crowding, the impact on teachers and their invisible work is seldom considered.

In our group, all but one of the teacher/activists taught in a school that was co-located with at least three others, and five of the ten teachers were currently or had previously taught in three or more classrooms within the past three years. After Nisha spoke, the teachers continued to share stories and strategies for managing multiple classrooms, in terms of workflow, pedagogy, and negotiating administrator relationships. As these stories began to wind down, Michelle turned to Lee, who had initially posed the question:

This question kind of reminds me of when your rubric for an assignment doesn't match up with the assignment. Like, you would never give one kid a distinct assignment and grade them somehow differently. It's kind of like that. We know we're not supposed to do that and yet, that's how we get assessed.

Here Michelle puts her finger on the mismatch between categories of teacher evaluation and the range of settings and circumstances that teachers must contend with. She compares the way that teachers are evaluated with the ways they're meant to evaluate students, suggesting, "You would never give one kid a distinct assignment and grade them somehow differently." In her analogy, the differences in teacher circumstances amount to distinct assignments—being in five classrooms is a different task than being in one, and it requires a different set of skills and tools to manage effectively. She raises the presumption of equity, suggesting that teachers are meant to evaluate their students fairly, to provide a rubric that aligns with the tasks of the assignment, and to grade all students according to the same principles. "We know we're not supposed to do that [provide

differential treatment] and yet, that's how we get assessed." Students are supposed to be treated fairly and equitably in the public schools, and yet in terms of facilities and resources, disciplinary measures, academic evaluation, cultural content, and references, to name a few, it is clear that schooling reproduces and often exacerbates social inequality for students. The fates of students and their teachers are intertwined in the public school system. As the popular activist slogan affirms, "Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions." But what this motto only hints at are all the ways these "conditions" affect pedagogy and structurally impact what both teachers and students can teach and learn.

Further, under the regime of neoliberal educational ideologies and policies that espouse an a-theoretical, ahistorical, market-based meritocratic ideal and ethos of personal responsibility, students, teachers, and schools are punished for living and working under conditions of racism, white supremacy, poverty, xenophobia, etc. In the framework of No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and New York City's Mayoral Control (particularly under Bloomberg/ Klein), school communities are sanctioned for their failure to meet impossible expectations—resources are withheld, and schools are threatened with closure, or closed. The Advance Teacher Evaluation System extends this logic to the treatment of teachers by linking teacher assessment, tenure and pay to student standardized test scores. The scores are measures above all else of class as intimately linked with race and culture, and the teacher observations are based on a rubric that imagines white, middle class, American-born, young people as the norm. Teachers who work with students who do not conform to the white, middle class model—the vast majority of the student population in New York City, where over 85% of students are youth of color and 79% are considered "poor"—are at odds with the policies and frameworks meant to support and evaluate their work. The invisibility of the work these teachers do—of the work of negotiating multiple classrooms, evening phone calls and chronically absent students, after-school support, and more—

is tied up with the invisibility and marginalization of the low-wealth, Black and Brown youth they teach. The low status and invisibility of the students carries over to their teachers, and the continual failure to see and value the lives and labor of both teachers and pupils perpetuates inequality.

## UNTIL I'M LIVING IT

### *invisible subjectivities*

In addition to feeling that parts of their work are invisible to policy frameworks and school administrators, the teacher/activists spoke about ways in which their jobs are misunderstood by members of their own social circles—friends, family, and partners. Most of their examples pivoted around the perception that teachers do not work hard. For example, one idea that we brainstormed about at length, but did not actually pursue as our group art project, was contributed by V who called it “teachers’ social identities.”

On the question of how teachers are perceived by different social groups, Betty recalled a recent conversation:

Yeah, I was even talking with a friend and I’m like, ‘oh yeah, I have all next week off,’ and he was like, ‘see, that’s why I don’t feel bad for teachers.’ And he wasn’t trying to be mean, but he doesn’t understand why I *need* that week off.

Betty pronounced the word “need” in a low guttural tone to suggest a feeling of desperation, and started laughing. Rebecca nodded vigorously, adding, “Why it makes a huge difference” to have the time off. “Right,” Betty replied, “and no one is asking you to feel bad, so that struck me too. I was like, you just don’t understand. I ignored that.” In the way Betty told this story, it seemed like her friend’s comments came almost out of the blue. They were talking about all kinds of things and when she shared her plans for next week, he planted himself in opposition (to her, to the teaching

profession, to complainers). I think part of her aim in sharing this story was to show how pervasive the narratives are that “teachers have it easy” and simultaneously that “teachers complain too much.” In this anecdote, Betty’s friend seems to take her vacation time personally or interpret it as a kind of affront. When he says, “See, that’s why I don’t feel bad for teachers,” in addition to undermining the rigor of the work and Betty’s feeling that she really “needs” the time off, he implies that she (or teachers in general) expect pity. In her telling, Betty rejects this expectation, speaking back to him in our group setting (though not directly in the moment of the encounter), saying, “and no one is asking you to feel bad, so that struck me too.” By saying “no one is asking you to feel bad,” Betty twists her friend’s claim, “that’s why I don’t feel bad for teachers,” highlighting his discourse about “feeling bad for teachers,” and her own refusal of his pity. These social narratives about teaching draw heavily on ideas about women’s work and invisible labor more generally—alignments between teaching and domestic work that mark those tasks as easy/ “not work,” and gendered tropes that position women as “victims,” “whiners,” or “damsels in distress.”

Around the table, the teachers shook their heads in disbelief and frustration with the friend “who doesn’t get it” and uttered affirmations of understanding. Nisha jumped in with another story:

Okay, so you know when you will text someone that you’re leaving and it’s 7:30, and they’re like, ‘Still at work? Didn’t you get off at 3:00?’ I’m like, ‘Are you joking? I’ve been here past 7:00 every single night ever. I always get off at 7:30!’ I still remember when I first started [teaching], my friends really thought I was just putting off seeing them. I was like, ‘I’m literally at PD.’ It’s sort of like when my parents call me [and say], ‘I don’t understand what you’re still doing there.’ I’m just like, ‘I’m not avoiding you. I’m really not. I’m doing a thing that is going to be ignored by all areas, including yours. It’s going to be completely thankless.’ [She laughs] Which is cool. I signed up for this.



On this afternoon, the conversation played out in jovial tones. Nisha laughed at the end of her story just as Betty had. Partly, it seemed like the good humor came from the release of speaking honestly about difficult topics, and the relief of being “among friends,” being in a group where they did not have to defend their work—how hard it is and how important, or explain why they loved it so much. And as a predominantly female group (eight women and two men), the laughing may also have come through as a socially acceptable way for women to deflect strong emotion. But behind their sarcasm and laughter, was a sense of isolation—the feeling that close friends and family don’t understand what they do. The exchanges Nisha documents here are like planes coming in from different angles that collide or miss each other completely. As Nisha recounts, “Didn’t you get off at 3:00?” → “Are you joking?”; “I don’t understand what you’re still doing there.” → “I’m not avoiding you.” Likewise, Betty said twice that her friend didn’t “understand,” and whereas in our conversation she contested his comment, while speaking with him, she decided to “ignore it.” These interactions highlight the spaces of disconnect between how teachers see and feel their work and how they feel seen by loved ones. The gaps and clashes between what teachers do and how it is seen open pockets of misunderstanding, misrecognition and invisibility.

Betty and Nisha’s narratives reflect a common genre of discourse among the teacher/ activists—calling up and speaking back to voices or social messages about the low value of teaching work. When Nisha assures the friend on the other end of her text, “I’ve been here past 7:00 every single night ever. I always get off at 7:30,” she submits the time stamps as hard evidence of her long hours and commitment. When she replies, “I’m literally at PD,” it’s as though she must prove her precise location to a disbelieving party. In this case Nisha cites particular conversations with friends and parents, but often the opposing “voices” that teachers invoked—those of actual people, institutional rules, policies, or media representations—were merely inferred. In interviews, workshops, and in the images teachers collected and created, they often spoke as if telling a

story from the middle, as though they were replying to invisible comments or questions from an ongoing public conversation about their worth.

At the end of Nisha's narrative, she replies to her parents' inquiry about what she could possibly still be doing at school at 7:30 by saying (either out loud to them or in her head or now to the group), "I'm doing a thing that is going to be ignored by all areas, including yours." Here Nisha is speaking about her parents and her relationship with them, how this "thing" that she devotes so much of her time and self to does not add up to their idea of what it is or should be. But as with Betty's friend and countless other teacher narratives, the views of her parents are intertwined with broader public storylines about teachers as heroes, martyrs, and as culpable for all of public education's ills. There is much more to say about the public discourse on teachers—how the narratives of bad teachers and hero teachers take shape and play out through news and entertainment media, policy, and data visualization. Here I want to emphasize the porous boundaries between the way teachers experience their work as invisible to all of these different entities—policies, supervisors, friends, the public, and even to themselves.

Indeed, as the participants' words and images affirm, their teacher identities, and the invisibility of certain parts of what they do—parts that look the most like domestic work, that are most feminized, that take place after or outside of school, and that concern historically marginalized youth of color—are also constructed in dialogical interchange. The way teacher work is seen and experienced is determined in classrooms, policy briefs, 7:30 pm texts, movie theaters, phone calls with parents, newspaper articles, and in the ways teachers continually author their own teacher identities in their heads, out loud, on screens, and in pictures. In their narratives and images, the teachers bring all kinds of unseen labor into focus—the pedagogical efforts of student engagement; after-school help and the work of maintaining relationships with "former" pupils;

evening work with families and the “extra” needs of struggling students; and the work of physically, pedagogically, and emotionally navigating co-location, among others. Across these examples, the teachers situate invisibility in terms of dominant discourses about schools, students, and teachers, in the intersecting dynamics of neoliberal education policy (“Danielson,” small schools, ELL policy, etc.), and the ways that these policies, discourses, and the material resources associated with them play out unevenly across race, class, gender and culture. Their pictures articulate the lines of power that prevent their labor from being seen in full, as they erase and redraw the boundaries around teacher practice, inviting us to reimagine the shape of the work they do.

## **I TRUST THEM AND YOU SHOULD TRUST ME: A “SIDE STORY” AT THE CENTER**

When I arrived at the Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn café that V, a high school media arts teacher, had chosen for our image elicitation interview, she was energized even after a long day of teaching and after-school music lessons<sup>63</sup>. We began looking at one of her drawings—a Ganesha-inspired self-portrait with four very active arms, when she interrupted herself with a “side story.” Her speech got louder and her tone grew indignant as she described an incident that she’d had with security guards at her school that afternoon. She explained,

*I was coming back from filming in the park [with my class] and when I came in security tried to make my students go through the scanner again. And then I'm like, 'But, they were just in the building.' And I was like, 'No. They're not going through it. They were with me the entire time in my sight.'*

*And the kids started to line up because they're seeing a uniform, and they're used to that intimidation. I said to them [the students], 'No, get out of line and get to the elevator,' and my kids are looking like, 'Should we?' I was like, 'Go.' So I told them to go and they did and they were kind of looking wide-eyed at security. And I said to the guard, 'You can call whoever and tell them V from Newcomer High School did this. I'm not putting my kids through this.'*

V went on to describe how the security guards called in their supervisors and ultimately forced the students to double back through the scanners (metal detectors) again. As she spoke, she conveyed a mix of emotion—outrage, spirited defiance, and a deep undercurrent of sadness. She continued to reflect on the incident, noting, “I think part of my frustration is you [the security guards] are completely undermining my relationship with my students...they were completely disregarding that I

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<sup>63</sup> A professional rock musician, V taught private drumming lessons to children after school.

*have a relationship with these students where I can say, I trust them, you know, and you [the security guards] should trust me.” This interaction diminishes V’s authority and responsibility as a teacher, and renders invisible her relational work with students and the trust she has built among the classroom community. Beneath the security guards’ refusal to accept V’s word as true, is an underlying set of practices and beliefs that mark her students as untrustworthy.*

*This anecdote in the life of a New York City teacher evokes the landscape of stigma and surveillance that urban youth are daily called to confront. It also suggests the fraught context that shapes teachers’ care, including the impact of the school culture and community on their work. Classrooms, as V makes clear, cannot be autonomous, “private-like” homeplaces, given the public intrusion of policies and practices that stigmatize students. The presence of metal detectors and uniformed security guards are only one piece of a broader apparatus of neoliberal school and community policies that brand students of color, emerging bilinguals, low income, and LGBTQ youth as lazy, failing, and criminal. The metal detectors together with armed and unarmed school security officers, video cameras and a set of “zero tolerance” policies, are part of a web of school surveillance that criminalizes a new range of student activity such as dress code violations, food fights, and doodling (Giroux 2013). Significantly, school security policies are enforced along race and gender lines—the disproportionate rates of disciplinary punishment of Black and Latino youth have been well documented (Ferguson 2000; Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera 2010; Krueger 2009; Skiba et al. 2002; Wallace et al. 2008; Wald and Losen 2003). In New York City during the 2013-14 school year, out of the 53,504 total school suspensions, only 6.7% were given to white students and of the 393 arrests, a mere 5.3% were white students, set against a figure of 14% total DOE enrollment (NYCLU 2014).*

*The securitization of school settings and the school-to-prison pipeline take shape alongside another collection of neoliberal education policies including No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the Advance Teacher Evaluation System. These policies take up a deceptive “color-blind ideology” that acknowledges race but disavows the social histories and circumstances that produce inequality and racism. Writing on No Child Left Behind, Zeus Leonardo (2007, p.269) explains, “Insofar as NCLB is guided by an ideology of whiteness, it depends on the continuation of racial differences as part of a logical, rather than social, outcome. In other words, by ostensibly giving public schools a chance to show progress, NCLB gives whiteness the license to declare students of color failures under a presumed-to-be fair system.” NCLB targets outcomes in four subgroups of students: minority children, students with disabilities, poor children and English language learners, highlighting their inferior (to middle class, American-born, white or SNAWS) performances, without providing any structural analysis of or redress to systemic oppression or historical and contemporary inequities. Leonardo goes on (2007, p.269), “NCLB acknowledges the symptoms, but not the causes of the achievement problem affecting children of color. It frames race as incidental (‘they happen to be whites or blacks, etc.’), rather than causal (‘because they are whites or blacks, etc.’), to student disparities in achievement.” Race to the Top, the 2009 Federal grant competition,<sup>64</sup> only intensified these dynamics by requiring states to build data systems to track student success (and failure—again without contextualized racial/ economic/ cultural analysis) and to develop teacher evaluation systems, like New York State’s Advance (2013), that link teacher evaluation, retention, and compensation to (so-called colorblind) quantified student achievement. In contrast to previous education policy (ESEA), these measures sanction poorly performing students and teachers by withholding resources, threatening teacher employment, and closing schools that do not achieve “adequate yearly progress.” This neoliberal ethic of personal responsibility, which Leonardo calls a ‘pull yourselves up by your own*

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<sup>64</sup> The structure of Federal school funding being allocated through competitive grants is itself significant. This approach counters the ideology of government services as a public good and reinforces a neoliberal ethic of scarcity and competition.

*schoolstraps'* (2007, p.271) approach, mirrors city, state, and national policies that have stripped down the social welfare system, and, as Luttrell (2016) argues, have disproportionately impacted children and youth.

Similarly, “zero tolerance” in schools, echoes the discriminatory “Broken Windows” mode of policing that aggressively focuses on minor offenses and misdemeanor arrests, like public alcohol consumption, bicycling on the sidewalk, and the broadly subjective “disorderly conduct.” This law enforcement philosophy, backed by the heavy use of “stop and frisk,” and “vertical sweeps” (the police tactic of randomly patrolling communal interior spaces in public housing projects), targets people and communities of color, especially Black and Latino men and predominantly Black and Latinx neighborhoods (NYCLU 2014). As we have seen in recent years, particularly with advances in cellphone technology, the brutal enforcement of laws against selling loose cigarettes, pirated CDs, failing to signal before changing lanes, and other minor non-violent offenses, continues to hold fatal repercussions for Black and Brown men and women who are being murdered by police at alarming rates (The Guardian n.d.).

Alongside “Broken Windows,” post-9-11 anti-terrorism policies have contributed to the criminalization of immigration, a phenomenon that was facilitated by the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (2003) and the institutionalized collaboration of the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency with local police departments and departments of corrections<sup>65</sup>. The results of this cooperation, in addition to an explosion in private prisons and a congress-approved detention bed quota of 34,000 (National Immigrant Justice Center 2017)—

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<sup>65</sup> This cooperation enabled by policies such as “Secure Communities,” (now called the “Priority Enforcement Program”), a federal program that checks fingerprints taken by local law enforcement at times of arrest against immigration databases. These fingerprints are then shared with the FBI, and passed along to ICE. If ICE is interested in an individual, agents may issue a request ask the local agency to hold the person, at which point they will be transferred over to ICE custody (Junck et al. 2015)

requiring that this number of beds be available at any one time for immigrant detainees—have led to massive increases in the numbers of immigration raids, immigrant detentions, and deportations. Since 2009, Obama deported more than 2.5 million people, 23% more than George W. Bush (Rogers 2016). This mode of policing, has disproportionately impacted Latinx immigrants (an estimated 49% of undocumented immigrants come from our closest neighbor in the Global South, Mexico, according to Krogstad, Passel & Cohn 2016), and created climates of fear and trauma in Latinx neighborhoods deeply impacted by mass incarceration and mass deportation. ICE's targeted anti-immigrant operations have been coupled with other forms of Islamophobic surveillance, including discriminatory profiling and an NYPD program of suspicion-less surveillance of Muslim institutions and communities that, despite extensive undercover operations from 2003-2014, never generated a single lead (Apuzzo & Goldstein 2014). As with the other communities affected by racially and culturally biased forms of surveillance and punitive law enforcement, this program contributed to stigma, fear and mistrust both within Muslim communities and directed at the NYPD (ACLU n.d.).

These policies and conditions—from school to neighborhood, from welfare reforms to the profiling of teens who look “foreign,” to the kind of suspicion that trails youth of color with watchful eyes down the aisles of the store—shape the way particular populations of young people are seen by others, and the ways they see themselves. All of these dynamics were at play in V's story of colliding with her school security apparatus. V teaches at a school that I call “Newcomer High School,” which is designed specifically for recently arrived immigrants and serves primarily students of color, most of whom are emergent bilinguals. So when school security officers required this class of majority low-wealth youth of color to pass through metal detectors for a second time, when the students lined up out of “intimidation,” and when V, a Nigerian-born Black teacher, said no, “I'm not putting my kids through this,” they were speaking to and through ideas about excessive policing practices in communities of color, social views and policies that degrade the value of Black and Brown lives in



*schools and neighborhoods, xenophobic surveillance, competing narratives about who these students are, in-the-air stories about race, power, class and identity. In the context of these unspoken oppositions, V's act of resistance is also an act of care.*

*Images of low-wealth youth of color, immigrant youth, and LGBTQ teens, so markedly absent in traditional mainstream media like television shows and movies, instead circulate in representations of failure and criminality. They show up in depictions of gang violence, neighborhoods in "crisis," and as de-contextualized sub-par scores on standardized tests, school attendance, and graduation rates. The modes of educational and community surveillance that produce these images of young people constitute a set of ideas and assumptions, controlling images (Collins 1986) that work from the outside—shaping the way teachers and security personnel view young people, and from within—affecting how the youth see themselves. It also profoundly shapes the work of teachers who are tasked with supporting, educating, and advocating for their students. V's refusal to usher her kids through the metal detector for a second time signaled a refusal to see her students in the way society sees them or to let them be seen that way by school security. Her protest was an act of solidarity with her students and care for them. This caring gesture is louder, more indignant and confrontational than the white middle-class teacher model (nor is it a likely scenario in a predominantly white middle-class school). It is life-lesson-level work of affirming her students' value (as trustworthy), of advocating on their behalves, modeling nonviolent resistance tactics, and it is part of V's pedagogy as a media educator. As she told me,*

*You got to stand up, and that's what I'm teaching my kids all day. Our documentaries, the foundation is how are we challenging power structures that we see as unfair. That's how they came up with the ideas [for their films on topics] like discrimination, scanners, etcetera, so you gotta, walk the walk.*

*This incident actualizes the creative and academic work she does with students to identify and critique unjust power structures through documentary film. V's resistance looped tight threads around these multifaceted forms of care and teaching, linking pedagogy with personal political action, with social justice.*

#### NOT UP TO SNAF

*V's story locates herself, her students, and her school outside of the white middle-class model. For one, the presence of metal detectors is racialized. A 2011 national study showed that students of color are more likely to have metal detectors in their schools, regardless of violence (Kupchik & Ward), and a 2013-14 study of New York City public schools suggests that 48% of Black students, 38% of Latinx students, and 43% of emerging bilinguals pass through metal detectors each day compared with 14% of white and Asian students (Aaron & Ye 2015). V's narrative (the fact that the students were required to go through again and her outrage at the instruction) highlights the way that her students' lives and experiences operate around references, discourses, and emotional realities outside of the white middle-class student imaginary. The SNAF model constructs a whole set of assumptions about the identities and families of public school students. For example, they are white, middle-class, American-born, native English speakers, they don't have disabilities, they are not parents, they don't work (in paid or unpaid employment), they are expected to advance from one grade to the next each summer and graduate in four years. Many scholars (Anyon 1980; Smith 1987; DeVault 1994; Luttrell 1997, 2003, 2012; Leonardo 2007; Apple 2013; Delpit 2006, Dumas 2014, etc.) have outlined the ways that institutional structures, and schools in particular, operate around unspoken assumptions of class, race and culture. For example, schools (and school systems) enforce norms and expectations through codes and social messaging that takes shape in monocultural curriculum that emphasizes whiteness (white histories, literatures, scholars, etc.); tests that disavow the cognitive strengths of bilinguals and emerging bilinguals, not to mention students*

*with disabilities; racialized tracking that systematically disadvantages students of color; and even by outfitting classrooms with ill-fitting furniture like desk-chairs too narrow to accommodate a student's pregnant belly (Luttrell 2003). Students like those at V's Newcomer's High School, and all the urban schools where these teacher/activists work, are bombarded with messages in the media, in their communities, and at school that they don't literally or metaphorically fit, that they are abnormal, and that they (or people who look like them) are not smart or successful. Nine out of ten of the teacher/activists work in urban schools that serve between 90-99% students of color and 83-100% poor students, a figure that in reality is substantially higher<sup>66</sup>. The social stigma and structural oppression that these students face is joined for many with stark poverty and a litany of poverty-induced stressors. In all the ways that students' lives and perspectives, school circumstances and dynamics, differ from the "Standard North American White Student" model, they demand both more and different efforts from their teachers. V's caring work of resistance transverses the boundary lines of caring for and about to offer support that is pedagogical and nurturing, political and emotional, both love and solidarity.*

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<sup>66</sup> School poverty is calculated based on the percent of students who receive free or reduced lunch. The free lunch program is determined based on vastly outdated poverty guidelines that don't take account of local variations in cost of living. In order to qualify for free lunch (in 2013-14 the year of the study), a family of four could earn 130% of poverty or \$30,615 annually, while students were eligible for reduced priced lunch if their family (of four) earned an annual income of \$43,568 or 185% of the poverty guideline (\$23,550). These numbers are widely argued to be too low at a national level and particularly inadequate in geographical regions like New York City with high costs of living. (Greenberg 2009; Light 2013) Alternate budget calculators such as the Economic Policy Institute tabulate a modest, but adequate income for a family of the same size in New York City \$98, 672, while the Basic Economic Security Tables Index (BEST) estimates a baseline budget of \$76,008 for a family of four in the Bronx. Whatever the number—a calculation that in practice is highly variable based on a range of assets and circumstances—it's clear that the current markers drawn from a 1969 model that tripled the Department of Agriculture's cheapest food plan—are insufficient and that the percentage of NYC public school students who live in poverty and experience poverty-induced stressors is much greater than the more than 76% on record.

## CHAPTER 6

### **MAPPING INTERCONNECTED CARE**

#### *introduction*

This chapter focuses on a series of drawings that I call “Teacher Practice Maps” created by the teacher/ activists to describe the various kinds of work that they do. These maps, along with the teachers’ explanatory narratives, present a radically different picture of what teaching looks like (and feels like when compared with the instrumental vision enacted through contemporary policies of high-stakes testing and teacher evaluation metrics. Rich with multifaceted tales of care, the maps are countervisualities that reject neoliberal accountability discourses in favor of a view of teaching that is critical, reflective, and care-full. In this section I plot out a close visual, textual, and inter-textual (Rose 2007) analysis of the maps in conversation with the teachers’ narratives, political economies of urban schools, and popular image and text-based discourses on teaching. My analysis of the maps pivots around three key points about the teacher/ activist’s caring labor: 1) Their carework is interconnected—the vast majority of teacher labor, from planning to pedagogy to student advisement, is enmeshed with care; 2) their carework is socially situated—the identities and social positions of both teachers and students shape carework; and 3) their carework is both individual and collective and inherently joined with justice.

During one workshop session, each participant created a “teacher practice map” in which they drew self-portraits and wrote about their daily labor. I instructed participants to “Consider the different kinds of work that comprise your practice and how they map onto different parts of the body. What do you do with your hands? Feet? Gut?” Fellow teacher and co-facilitator Lee added, “Teaching is a full body endeavor and there are particular teacher tasks associated with particular parts of the body. My hands might gesture and clean, and my legs might

metaphorically kick a student's booty into gear. What kind of mental work do you do at night, on the weekends or while you're teaching?" Teachers responded to this prompt in a variety of ways—Michelle plotted out a geographical map of her morning trip to school and Amir sketched a giant set of bloodshot eyes to represent the bulk of his preparatory work as a media educator—however seven of the ten teachers drew images of their full bodies (ranging from stick figure to caricature to life-size silhouette) ringed with small bits of text annotating specific aspects of their teaching practice in relationship to specific body parts.

The idea to map teacher work onto the body came from my co-facilitator Lee. I first imagined a more abstract mapping activity, inviting teachers' to interpret the call to "map their practice," in any way they chose. But Lee was clear on the importance of the body to this exercise, and while initially I did not quite understand it, I now feel that her concept and the drawings that resulted function as a form of resistance to dominant ideologies of teacher value and evaluation. The drawings embody teacher labor in a way that serves as radical counterpoint to the rubrics, ratings and disembodied scores of dominant neoliberal depictions of teaching. Locating teacher work in particular teacher bodies humanizes the visual discourse and opens space to see the work of teaching—intellectual, physical, emotional, and all the rest—as holistic and interconnected.

The drawings that followed from this prompt are diverse in scale, aesthetic, and content. Many of the images are provisional, roughly sketched and only three-quarters complete. Some drawings are faceless, footless, and lightly traced. The largest (Lee's) extends beyond her 5'2" frame across a curl of brown craft paper, while Phoebe and Betty sketched their figures in pencil on 8.5"x11" cardstock. The drawings look warm, girly, tentative, dandyish, harried, defiant, and busy. And they are full of words—overflowing, around the edges, and scrawled across bodies. In the interplay between descriptive narrative and drawn depictions, they capture something

ineffable about the scope and pace of teaching work—about the deep emotional labor, the middle-management quality, the day-in-and-day-out-ness, the physicality, and the intellectual demands. These body maps help make visible so much of the invisible work of teaching—work that is invisible because of its interiority, and work that is invisible to teacher evaluation metrics and accountability policies that fixate narrowly on student standardized test scores. Significantly, the vast majority of the tasks, duties, efforts, thoughts, and feelings that the teachers express are caring practices.

Of the 214 items outlined in the ten teacher maps, 212 of them can be interpreted as carework (only Rebecca's data entry and Michelle's time card duties elude recognition as caring tasks). In these maps, carework takes many forms. Carework looks like the string of activities Nisha assigns to her left arm "holding a student's bag while they look for an assignment, juggling boxes, carrying a pile of books, draped with bags of supplies for holiday celebration, pushing on a table leg while it's screwed back together." It looks like the work that Lee locates in her left-brain, "designing essential questions that will not confuse bilingual students" still struggling with academic language. It takes shape in Sarah's "superfly haircut," a close-cut butch coif which she identifies as a "bat signal for LGBTQ students." Carework shows up in Betty's lively feet. She writes, "These are super energetic. Allow me to jump and cheer when kids say awesome things!"

In speaking about her own map, Nisha talked about her carework (my word, not hers) in terms of the "interplay" of teaching. She explained:

I think there's a tendency in the public discourse to be counterproductive about teaching... whether it's reducing learning to something that can be measured by tests [or] reducing teaching to something that can be checked off on a walk through. It was important to me to at least begin to scratch the surface of showing that it's not really like that. That for

every action or decision there is here, there is a mirror action or a provoking action or inspirational action or choice or thought on the part of the members of the classroom community, the students.

Nisha held the photo of her drawing, skimming the text. As she continued to speak she pointed her finger to particular notations on the page:

I'm trying to think of an example. [When I'm] scanning the room, the students are doing something. And [when I'm] teacher staring, the student is doing something. I am reading something [because] the student has produced something. I'm glancing at something [because] the student has produced something of a different nature. [When I'm] squinting at something, there's something I'm trying to figure out in the room that the students also will interact with in their experience. [When I'm] looking over, I'm observing an interaction [between students]. [When I'm] Checking in, the student has kind of shown me that they need that. It's sort of an interplay.

Nisha's description highlights the dynamic relationality of teaching, and draws our eye to the caring attention that she brings to students and the unfolding events of classroom life. Her interpretation brings to mind Luttrell's (2013) concept of the "choreographies of care," an idea that imagines care in process and as a collaborative endeavor. I think about what Nisha says like a trust-building game that involves a big ball of string. She begins by holding the fictional ball in her hand and as she fixes her "teacher stare" on a daydreaming student, she tosses the ball her way. The student returns her attention to the room and, while keeping a length of string, passes the ball back to Nisha. As other young people speak and think, pose questions, and act out, Nisha responds passing the ball back and forth and around the room so that soon they are all blanketed with a web of yarn each finger looped through a tight zig-zag—a physical manifestation of their interconnectedness, their joint efforts, their back and forths, their relationships and interplay. Nisha's teacher practice map and her skillful analysis places teaching

work “in play,” suggesting labor in the form of movement, spaces between, interaction, unpredictability and creative experimentation.

Many of the tasks depicted in the maps do not immediately look like carework and are not intrinsically caring practices. Rather, they are characterized by Nisha’s notion of interplay, driven by the real and imagined bodies at the other end of the string. Through group discussions and interview explanations, teachers spoke about the work in relational terms, locating various tasks as shaped by, in dialogue with, or out of concern for others (mostly students, but also colleagues, families, communities, social issues, and selves). For example, even a task as seemingly straightforward as Sarah’s “makes photocopies,” has a backstory of care. In our interview Sarah spoke about working at Bronx Humanities, a transfer school where most students had previously struggled with formal education. She spoke about “how hard it is to get students to copy something down from a PowerPoint,” and what a difference it can make for her students to have “differentiated notes and handouts” (in other words, handouts that are tailored to students’ differing skills and abilities). For Sarah the work of making photocopies is about trial and error, seeing how students respond with and without printouts, considering their educational histories and challenges. It is both a caring act as well as a strategic pedagogical move. Furthermore, this work is connected to her students’ social positions as young people who are “over-age and under-credited” (an official and deficit-oriented designation which is highly raced, cultured, and classed) and the social circumstances of her school, which as Sarah explained, had, in April, nearly run out of paper for the school year and was rationing the remaining reams. The shortage of this most basic school material (and the lack of funding cushion or ability to fundraise with parents as well-resourced public schools often do) points to Bronx Humanities’ inadequate resources and the social demographics of the school, which serves almost all students of color (98%), most of whom are



poor (85%) and only 20% of whom graduate in four years. In this way, the photocopies reflect the context and social circumstances of Sarah's caring work.

Sarah's photocopies also serve as a prosaic model for the teacher/ activists' interconnected carework. Making photocopies entails the physical act, the cognitive process of deciding what to copy, the intellectual and empathic work of creating differentiated documents tailored to the needs and skills of particular students, and the pedagogical planning for how to integrate and use the printouts. Close reading of this one task demonstrates the multifaceted nature of teachers' care and the intersecting links between these different aspects of care labor—emotional, physical, intellectual and pedagogical. I was interested in further probing and visualizing the teachers' tasks across multiple modes of care. So I transcribed the teacher map texts, dividing the writings into discrete tasks, thinking, or feeling work, and reviewed the texts in conversation with workshop and interview transcripts in which teachers explained their thinking and motivations around what they wrote. I then charted the map texts across ten "sites of care" that I developed by drawing on other scholars of carework as well as the teacher/ activists' own images and narratives. The ten "sites of care" categories, with attributions, are:

1. Emotional (Lynch, Baker, & Lyons 2009)
2. Cognitive (Lynch, Baker, & Lyons 2009)
3. Physical (Lynch, Baker, & Lyons 2009)
4. Attentive (Tronto 1989; Noddings 1984)
5. Reflective + Self-Reflective (Ruddick 1989; McKamey 2011)
6. Advocacy/ Resistance (DeVault 1999)
7. Survival (Rollins 1985)
8. Affectionate
9. Self (Ginwright 2016)
10. Pedagogical

I created a table with columns for each of the ten categories of care, assigned a color to each teacher participant and coded each phrase or activity from the practice maps across the ten categories. However, rather than identifying a single, dominant carework category for each task, I used an “open coding” system to plot the tasks across multiple sites of care. This approach allowed me to highlight the nodes of connection across various categories. Through the horizontal repetition of colored rectangles, the chart makes visible the ways that discreet teacher tasks fulfill several aims at once. In this way, teacher carework takes form as a pattern in the movement and interplay between different facets of caring, like a geometric patterned depiction of “choreographies of care” (Luttrell 2013) a notion that highlights the activity(ies) of caring and the dynamic relationships involved.

Table 8. Lee's Sites of Care (Excerpt)

EMOTIONAL	COGNITIVE	PHYSICAL	ATTENTIVE	REFLECTIVE/ SELF- REFLECTIVE	ADVOCACY/ RESISTANCE	SURVIVAL	AFFECTION	SELF CARE	PEDAGOGICAL
	IEP's, IEP's, I have to read them over		IEP's, IEP's, I have to read them over		IEP's, IEP's, I have to read them over				IEP's, IEP's, I have to read them over
	Writing tips for the bilingual students, translate!					Writing tips for the bilingual students, translate!			Writing tips for the bilingual students, translate!
	Outlines, lesson plans, Essential questions—those essential questions that will not confuse the kids! They don't have academic language				Outlines, lesson plans, Essential questions—those essential questions that will not confuse the kids! They don't have academic language				Outlines, lesson plans, Essential questions—those essential questions that will not confuse the kids! They don't have academic language
Eyes: I see you sneaky peeps! Looking: are we safe?	Eyes: I see you sneaky peeps! Looking: are we safe?		Eyes: I see you sneaky peeps! Looking: are we safe?	Eyes: I see you sneaky peeps! Looking: are we safe?	Eyes: I see you sneaky peeps! Looking: are we safe?	Eyes: I see you sneaky peeps! Looking: are we safe?	Eyes: I see you sneaky peeps! Looking: are we safe?		Eyes: I see you sneaky peeps! Looking: are we safe?
Circles of trust. Do these exist? How can I create them?	Circles of trust. Do these exist? How can I create them?		Circles of trust. Do these exist? How can I create them?	Circles of trust. Do these exist? How can I create them?		Circles of trust. Do these exist? How can I create them?	Circles of trust. Do these exist? How can I create them?		Circles of trust. Do these exist? How can I create them?
	The translator- I should have a separate sheet for this!		The translator- I should have a separate sheet for this!		The translator- I should have a separate sheet for this!	The translator- I should have a separate sheet for this!			The translator- I should have a separate sheet for this!

Table 9. Lee's Sites of Care (detail, shop DOE)

PHYSICAL	ADVOCACY/RESISTANCE	SURVIVAL	PEDAGOGICAL
Type in reference numbers for shop DOE!! Our kids need these resources.	Type in reference numbers for shop DOE!! Our kids need these resources.	Type in reference numbers for shop DOE!! Our kids need these resources.	Type in reference numbers for shop DOE!! Our kids need these resources.

For example, Table 8 and Table 9 depict an excerpt of Lee's *Sites of Care*, mapping her practice across a range of caring labors, efforts, and feelings. The rhythms or choreographies of Lee's carework in Table 8 illustrate the interconnected aims of her work—each task repeats across at least three sites of care. We can also note the prevalence of cognitive and pedagogical care in

the work she depicts, and the absence of physical work and self care (the latter, a striking pattern across all the maps, which I take up later). In Table 9, we zoom in on the work and purpose of one task in Lee’s map: “Type in reference numbers for shop DOE!! Our kids need these resources.” Mapping this task across four sites of care, we see that it is more than the physical labor of sitting at her desk, after the school day has ended, to look up appropriate reference numbers. It is also the work of determining what materials her students need in relation to her curricula, advocating on their behalf to administrators (as she indicated in our interview), and helping students with limited resources at a school with limited resources, manage and get what they need. It is physical, cognitive, advocacy, survival, and pedagogical care.

Table 10. V’s Sites of Care (detail, careful with words)

EMOTIONAL	COGNITIVE	ATTENTIVE	REFLECTIVE/ SELF- REFLECTIVE	AFFECTION	SELF CARE	PEDAGOGICAL
Mouth: I make a point to be careful with my words and choose ones that express love even when I have to work to feel it	Mouth: I make a point to be careful with my words and choose ones that express love even when I have to work to feel it	Mouth: I make a point to be careful with my words and choose ones that express love even when I have to work to feel it	Mouth: I make a point to be careful with my words and choose ones that express love even when I have to work to feel it	Mouth: I make a point to be careful with my words and choose ones that express love even when I have to work to feel it	Mouth: I make a point to be careful with my words and choose ones that express love even when I have to work to feel it	Mouth: I make a point to be careful with my words and choose ones that express love even when I have to work to feel it

Likewise, when V writes in a small square of text near the mouth of her self-portrait, “I make a point to be careful with my words and choose ones that express love even when I have to work to feel it,” (Table 10) she references the self-care of her daily meditation practice, as well as her teaching philosophy, physical, mental, and emotional work. She elaborated in our interview:

I know that that practice [meditation] aids me so much in everything I [do]— so it's seeing people as people regardless if they're younger; seeing beyond what appears to be obvious, because so much of what we do and how we interact with each other is based on habit. It's based on habit and it's oftentimes based on not really being present to what is actually happening. Definitely being introspective and being self-critical, constantly self-critical; critical with my words, expressing love even when I have to search to feel it. Yeah, that goes to being very careful with my words—not wanting to have to apologize but knowing when I do need to apologize, which is so liberating.

V went on to describe an incident where a student “was not respecting the culture of the classroom,” and unplugged her SMART Board (a digital interactive whiteboard) to charge his phone. She described getting more and more frustrated with his “casual response,” until she finally asked him to leave. She continued:

I met him outside and I was like, ‘I really want to apologize for my part in that because I did get a little too amped.’ I really did. I mean the gist of what I was saying I didn’t apologize about, but the way that I approached it was not conducive to resolving it peacefully, so my ability to say to him, ‘I’m really sorry for the part I played in that, however, I want you to know that this isn’t the way to respond.’ You could just see his surprise looking at me like, ‘Wow. I did not expect you to say that to me,’ and then he took this really cleansing, deep breath and he was like, ‘I’m sorry.’ I was like, ‘Thank you.’ This was months ago, and our relationship from that point on has been stronger and stronger and stronger because - I think it’s important to be vulnerable, like there is a healthy vulnerability. Like, ‘I’m a human too,’ and I think it's really important for me to show you respect and admit when I could've done something better.

For V, daily meditation is a physical, emotional, cognitive practice of self-care, but it extends “beyond the cushion” into her reflexive work, communication, and relationships in the classroom. It

is the self-reflective work of looking critically at her actions and acknowledging when she “could have done better,” the emotional work of difficult conversations, and the pedagogy of modeling respectful communication. Significantly, these elements are interwoven—her reflexivity cannot be parsed from the pedagogy, from the emotion, and intellectual reasoning. V’s careful words and the meditation practice that supports them are all these things at once.

V’s words, Lee’s school supplies, and Sarah’s photocopies are representative of the broader collection of teacher carework depicted in the practice maps. Nearly all of the teacher work correlated with at least three of the sites of care and the average number of sites per teacher task was more than five. The *Sites of Care* Chart (excerpted in Table 8) makes visible the interconnected carework of teachers and points to several insights about teacher work, including: 1) teaching is multitasking; and 2) teacher carework, at least in the case of these teacher/activists, favors certain kinds of caring practices and orientations. The first insight seems to be a common-sense fact of teaching: in order to lead a classroom of more than twenty students with different abilities, temperaments, and desires, to balance the demands of policies with school culture, with student needs, and with the teacher’s own skills/ interests/ beliefs, teaching is a practice of near constant multitasking. Multitasking, as the table indicates, involves layering and integrating teacher lives and practices—making their work do “double-(triple-, quadruple-)duty.” Thus, when V writes, “I read about things that are relevant to my life. I live as an artist and an educator—these get me out of my head,” she references a cognitive practice of self-care and self-reflection. The statement reflects the way she needs to feed herself as an artist and intellectual, and also how this work, in turn, supports her teaching. She always has an eye out for news stories to bring to her students or film project ideas. For example, she spoke about reading a (then) recent article on the first openly gay National Football League player and immediately asking herself, “How can we start talking about our LGBT curriculum by pulling this in?” This kind

of multitasking means that V keep her teacher-self, students, curriculum, and lesson planning at front of mind even when she is out of school and engaged in explicitly non-school activities.

In some ways, “multitasking” is not the right word, because in our culture of cascading Internet tabs and walking while texting, multitasking is framed as a choice and often critiqued for the diminished quality of singular attention that it implies. For teachers, the complexity of classroom life and the multiplicity of tasks, thoughts, and feelings they must take on to support and address that complexity is a given. As Carla Rensenbrink writes of the elementary classrooms of feminist teachers in her 2001 ethnography, “Their classrooms are full of energy, noise, humor, pain, love, purpose, and confusion. There is always a lot more going on than any teacher can possibly know...It is important to keep in mind that this overwhelming number of events and amount of detail is the reality of teaching.” The vastness of these events and details are reflected in the teacher maps; in the sheer number of tasks they report, in the content of their contributions, and across the multiple categories of care. In addition to the double-duty V describes above, multitasking also looks like different thoughts, efforts, attentions or feelings that take place at the same time, as in Betty’s inner monologue:

Do I sound positive? Did I ask the right question? Should I call on that student? Or that one?

Should I give tough love? Or take a “chill pill”? Should I push this student? Or is he at his

max? Did I make a good call? Should I raise my voice or lower my voice...?

The conversation Betty has with herself, her self-doubt and mode of navigating classroom decisions and relationships, takes place while she facilitates class discussion, lectures, and talks with students. As Betty recounted during our interview, “As my day happens, I’m constantly asking myself questions.” Many of the other participants identified with Betty’s text, speaking about the familiarity of her questions and the ways this inner dialogue had both softened and persisted over time. Rebecca, who was in her tenth year teaching, reflected, “You are always, especially

when you are newer at it, [questioning yourself]. It still is prevalent [for me]. Why did I do that? I should have done that. I should have had this ready.” She spoke about the emotional impact of these questions lessening with experience, but she also connected this mode of thinking to the structures of teaching work:

You are always thinking about what is going to be the next move in the class. Where can we go with this? Especially when you are facilitating a discussion. Definitely, you are always kind of ahead, so you are listening and then you are ahead. It is definitely like that.

The work of teaching requires teachers to be at once present in the moment with students and class material while also staying “kind of ahead”—reserving one section of brain for what comes next. Teachers are performing an unscripted (in most cases) improvisational, interactive, live-action drama for most of the day. This means that they are working out decision-making on the fly, while navigating their own and the students’ unpredictable, ever-changing actions, reactions, and emotions. As Betty affirmed:

[As a teacher] you’re always growing. You’re never... you never ‘got it.’ And because there’s sooo many different situations that happen and sooo many things that could happen and sooo many different reactions and sooo many different personalities, you never can really know what was the best thing to do. So, you’re constantly asking yourself what it is.

In this excerpt, Betty connects the dynamic conditions of teaching to the need for educators to consistently challenge and sharpen their own practice. Teacher carework pivots around unstable conditions of relationality—all the different situations, reactions, and personalities that comprise classroom life. Rebecca refers to this as “the human element of it all,” which seems to suggest both the variability of the practice across different collections and configurations of students, and also the centrality of human relationships. These conditions of teacher labor—the number of students,



changing personalities and groupings over time, as well as heavy teaching loads—necessitate intersecting forms of teacher work. This may be especially true in the United States. U.S. teachers work over 1,000 instructional hours per year compared with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average of 658, and 377 in countries like Denmark (OECD 2014). It's not surprising then that, in the context of complex, inter-relational classroom life, teachers' caring work is profoundly interconnected.

The examples of Betty's inner-monologue and V's off-hours impromptu lesson planning point to particular caring practices that were especially prevalent in the teacher maps and narratives, and repeated frequently in the *Sites of Care* chart. The table below details the frequency of each care category as represented across the teacher practice maps, with the four most recurrent categories highlighted in chartreuse: cognitive care, attentive care, reflective/ self-reflective care, and pedagogical care. This quick quantitative snapshot suggests a rough distribution of the teacher/activists' caring labor, with the fewest tasks represented as self-care and the most as pedagogical. The results are, in some ways, unsurprising. We might have expected that cognitive and pedagogical labor would form the bulk of teacher carework. But, in broad strokes, this distribution begins to construct an image of teacher work that is quite distinct from dominant narratives or from the kind of skills that are emphasized in teacher training programs and evaluation systems, such as New York's Advance.

The Danielson Framework, which structures Advance's discourse on teacher work and evaluation from "highly effective" to "ineffective," and forms the 4-domain/ 22-component rubric for classroom observations, does address some of these concepts, but often with a focus limited to academic achievement. For example, the segment most closely linked with teacher reflexivity is component 4a, "Reflecting on Teaching," housed in "Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities," a

section which includes components such as “maintaining accurate records” and “communicating with families.” Danielson (2013, p.47) defines teacher reflexivity in this way:

Reflecting on teaching encompasses the teacher’s thinking that follows any instructional event, an analysis of the many decisions made in both the planning and the implementation of a lesson. By considering these elements in light of the impact they had on student learning, teachers can determine where to focus their efforts in making revisions and choose which aspects of the instruction they will continue in future lessons.

This language locates reflexivity narrowly in terms of academic teaching (defined as a pre-planned lesson) and the teacher’s impact on student learning. While this kind of reflection is essential for teachers—the work of considering the elements of a lesson, student reactions/ confusions/ and learning—it is only one small part of the reflective work that the teacher/activists depicted. For example, there is no bullet point for Betty’s in-real-time reflexive facilitation or V’s self-reflective apology. Danielson’s model of teaching and learning places the concept of academic “effectiveness” at the center, while the teacher-activists locate human relationships at the core of their work.

Table 11. Distribution of 'Teacher Practice Map' texts across Sites of Care

EMOTIONAL	COGNITIVE	PHYSICAL	ATTENTIVE	REFLECTIVE / SELF-REFLECTIVE	ADVOCACY / RESISTANCE	SURVIVAL	AFFECTION	SELF-CARE	PEDA-GOGICAL
33	43	29	46	44	20	21	23	16	57

Table 11 maps the distribution of teacher work recorded in the teacher practice maps across the ten “sites of care.” This chart underscores lesser talked-about aspects of teaching, such as the necessary quality of presence and receptive attention to students; endless reflection on students’ social, emotional, and academic behaviors and learning, as well as the teachers’ own methods; and the pedagogical work of making connections to teacher interests, students’ lives, and events

of the day. We can see these categories in the example of Betty's inner monologue—the cognitive work of reasoning through her lesson plan, the triangulated demands for attention from students, subject, and self, the reflexivity that guides her student observations and her own instructional decision-making, and the work of constantly threading classroom events back to pedagogical aims.

Betty's pedagogical carework, like that of the other participants, is more than a focus on academic content. Rather, this kind of care for the teacher/activists means that within the classroom environment (and sometimes outside as well), everything is up for pedagogical grabs, and teachers are positioned as models—not necessarily perfect or proper—but vectors for learning of all sorts. Thus V's apology was also a form of pedagogy as she modeled self-reflexivity and vulnerability to her student. She was showing him how to take responsibility for oneself, defuse and resolve interpersonal conflicts, and demonstrate respectful classroom behavior. This kind of care-full pedagogy was present in all but a handful of the teachers' contributions—in Sarah's self-proclaimed "fashion role model" status for her LGBTQ students (a topic I will take up further in the next section); in Eli's determination to always have a pen for a student who needs one because, as he says, "It's an opportunity to go, 'Of course I have a pen. Pens are awesome, here in fact have mine and carry it around going, 'I have Mr. Eli's pen';" in Nisha's effort to maintain a "blank/ neutral [facial expression] to give students the space to grow/ not need [her] reaction eventually." Pedagogical care is often integrated with scholastic curriculum and the correlations among teacher-student relationships, students' social and emotional learning, and academic achievement have been well documented (Durlak et al., 2011; Aronson, 2002; Duckworth, Quinn & Seligman, 2009; Elliot & Dweck, 2005).

However, teacher care is more than a facilitator of academic success. It positions teacher labor in the context of human relationships and interactions, and frames the work of pedagogy in terms of making connections. The teacher/ activists' pedagogical work lives in the links. It links between school spaces/ study and students' experiences, home lives and identities; among students and between students and teachers; and by connecting whatever is happening at any point in time in the classroom, news, and world. The teacher / activists construct "teachable moments," a cutesy expression for teachers' integrated improvisational pedagogy. This work integrates academic, social and emotional learning, and transverses the binary dialectics of caring for and about, demanding both intimate attentions and social and political commitments. It is deeply embodied work in the sense that it requires a teacher's total being. As Phoebe commented in our group reflection on the teacher maps:

Well, definitely it [teaching] is an entire body process. Body, mind, emotions, everything gets used. The sheer amount of energy that goes into having a job that involves all three of those capacities constantly going at the same time, because you don't just turn one off and turn it on... Everything is going at the same time... I think that idea is represented by most of the maps that we made— You have to draw a whole body because literally, every portion of yourself goes into teaching.

Here Phoebe talks about the way teaching is felt in the body. She suggests that not only is teaching "an entire body process" that engages "body, mind, and emotions," but that with teaching, "everything's going at the same time." Teaching is multitasking and it demands multifaceted bodily presence.

Phoebe's statement also brings to mind another definition of embodiment, the sense of knowing and feeling something deeply in one's bones. She says, "literally, every portion of yourself goes into teaching," echoing some variant of an observation made by each of the participants

concerning a kind of fluidity between their teacher and non-teacher identities. They spoke and wrote and made images about bringing their teacher selves into life outside the classroom. Examples of this are V's LGBT curriculum ideas and the way Rebecca engages teens on the subway to counter the negative attention and "hate" that young people of color often confront in public spaces; the way that it was often hard to turn off worry about students or self-critical reflection at day's end; and also the way they brought their own interests, identities, social, and cultural backgrounds to the classroom. These varied portraits depict teachers' carework as relational, human-centered, interconnected and profoundly embodied.

#### *TEACHER + STUDENT IDENTITIES + SOCIALLY-SITUATED CARE*

In addition to the portrayal of teacher carework as interconnected and relational, the teachers' practice maps represent an intersectional vision of teaching that is deeply rooted in their own social identities and positions as well as those of their students and school communities. As stated previously, nine of the ten teacher/activists teach in schools with student bodies that veer significantly from the SNAF,<sup>67</sup> or SNAWS (Standard North American White Student) model—populations of between 90 to 99% Students of Color and 83 to 100% poor students. And of those nine teachers, four are people of color and two are queer (one person of color is also queer) who bring their own non-SNAF lenses to their teaching and carework. The way these teachers approach their practice is profoundly influenced by the needs and cultures of non-SNAF students and by their own cultures and shaping experiences. In this section I will explore four of the teacher practice maps in depth. Each of the maps offers an unconventional image of teacher care, rooted in social identity and context—race, language, class, culture, gender, and sexuality.

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<sup>67</sup> Referenced earlier in the text, the concept of "The Standard North American Family," was developed by sociologist Dorothy Smith (1999) to crystalize the force of white middle-class norms and the corollary set of assumptions that guide policy, practice, and institutional behavior. Here I update her acronym to the less-snappy SNAWS (Standard North American White Student) to consider the implications of educational policy and discourse that are grossly out of step with urban school populations and the work these teachers depict.

*“a bat signal for LGBT students”*

The first portrait is Sarah's, a cartoonish purple line drawing sketched onto a 3x3 foot square of brown craft paper, circled with arrows, speech bubbles, and short strokes pointing to blocks of orange, green, and purple text. Sarah renders her full-body figure in a caricature style, confident single marker strokes tracing the outline of a side-swept pompadour, large smiling face, one hand reaching up in a friendly wave, the other wrapped around her tapered waistline. She wears a long-sleeved collared shirt, pants and a set of shoes captioned in bright orange text to read, “fashion role model (Clark's boots).” Looking at the image, I noticed Sarah's facile hand and the mix of confidence and self-deprecating humor. For example, an arrow pointing to her armpit reads, “sweat from honest hard work and overheating.” Even with spare exaggerated marks, the image captures some of Sarah's essence.

When Amir spoke about the drawing during our interview, he immediately referenced the figure's androgyny, describing the image affectionately as looking like “a dandy boy from a '30s cartoon kind of thing, with a hint of breasts.” Amir is older than Sarah, 44 as compared with her 25, and also identifies as queer. He called the image “a very queer being,” a representation that he saw as “so endearing and so beautiful and wonderful.” When I asked him what he found so special about the image, he replied, “It's that someone like that can have that kind of a self-image and be able to express it in this way. And be a teacher. And be comfortable being a teacher as a queer, in a queer body.” Amir had been surprised and visibly touched (eyes watery) that Sarah could so thoroughly inhabit both a teacher identity and queer identity and see them as complementary.

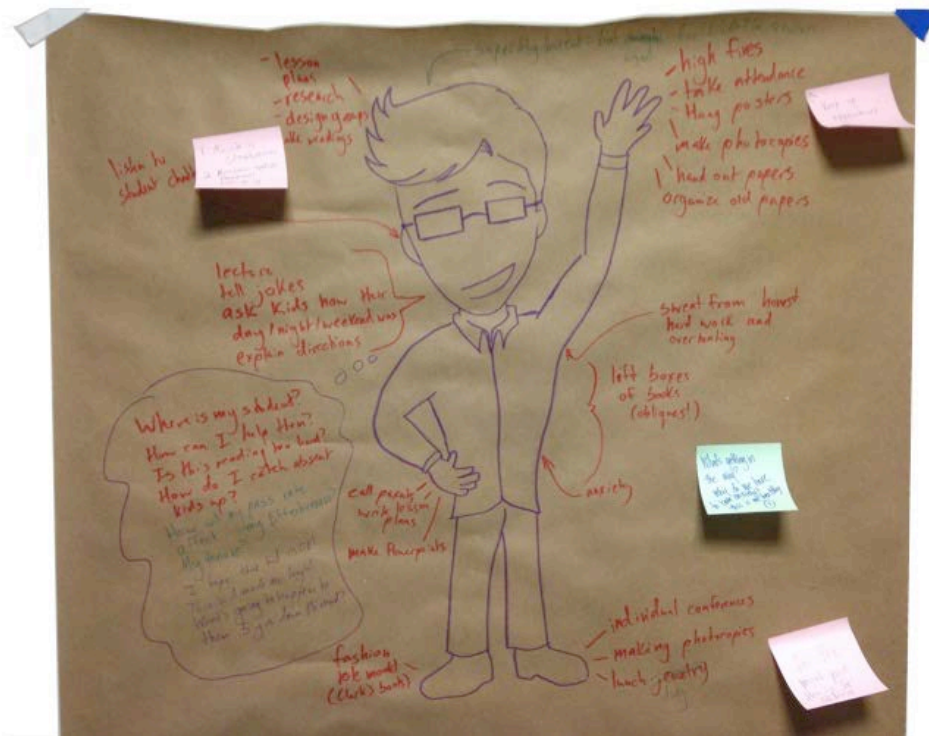


Figure 25. Sarah's Teacher Practice Map

During my interview with Sarah, she also spoke about her “superfly haircut,” which she described as a “bat signal for LGBT students,” and queer presentation, drawing out the links between her appearance and teaching work. I asked her to describe the image and after listing some of the text and making a joke about her “sweaty armpits,” she said:

I think as an educator who has really chosen to be out to the kids, a lot of my physical appearance tends to be a subject of conversation with the kids. Like they talk about my clothes or they talk about my haircut, or they talk about my gender presentation, like, ‘how come you never wear a dress?’ So that does become a part of my teaching and the way I educate.

For Sarah, the caring pedagogy of her haircut is many-layered. It is expressed in the lunchtime support group she runs for queer and questioning students and what she describes as “a small fan

club of queer girls” who often stay after class. Her own nonconforming gender presentation comes through in her curriculum as well. She spoke, for example, about a unit on the age of exploration where they studied “How European viewpoints changed over time about people who look different—topics about sexuality, gender and how women are treated.” Her sexuality and queer presentation are also a form of pedagogy beyond particular lesson plans, a more deeply rooted “part of [her] teaching and the way [she] educates.” She talked about coming out to students at her last job as a sixth grade teacher and said, “With my sixth graders, they were, ‘Here’s a successful-ish person who’s living the good life...’ For them, it was enough to know you could be a human and also have this thing about you be open in public.”

This is a kind of modeling work, like V’s in-the-hall apology, but for Sarah the modeling is crossed with basic facets of her own identity—her haircut, clothing purchases, and the fact that as students remark, she “dresses like a man.” This work is like what Maeve O’Brien (2009) says of her study of mothers’ caring labor, a kind of carework that is “about being rather than doing, especially being available to support and encourage children and listen to their concerns” (p.165). For Sarah, the “being” is about her own self and self-expression, *being herself*, as well as *being there* for students who need her guidance, friendship or support. Being an out lesbian teacher with short hair who never wears skirts is a way of showing LGBTQ and straight cisgender students alike that success and queerness (and perhaps other kinds of difference too) can go together.

As Amir reflected, the being and doing of Sarah’s queer appearance is tightly braided with her caring pedagogy—the way she decides to dress each day along with decisions about if and how to discuss her gender presentation and sexuality with students. Commenting on the haircut and boots, he considered,



She's using signs, she's using codes. The haircut, the fashion role model, even her being, it's interesting, even her boots and her fashion are about communicating some sense of self or community. Her hair is a code for the gay kids. Being fashionable is for the kids' sakes.

Again, her need of being fashionable in society still has kids in mind.

The work of keeping “kids in mind,” remaining attuned to their needs and perceptions even when they're not present, echoes one of Lynch's (2007) core practices of “love labour:” the mental work of “holding the persons (care recipients) and their interests in mind, keeping them ‘present’ in mental planning, and anticipating and prioritizing their needs and interests” (p. 260). This inner-circle task is, as Lynch affirms, demanding mental work and it does reflect aspects of parenting in the way that Sarah serves as an example for queer and lesbian students that may not have access to role models (fashion or otherwise) at home or in their communities. This modeling and the close relationships of her support group suggest elements of the longstanding queer practice of forming “families of choice,” developing tight familial bonds in the LGBTQ community that sometimes follow homophobic/ trans-phobic rejection by one's family of origin. Sarah's teacher practice map communicates her caring consideration for students across the concentric circles of love and solidarity work. But her nonconforming gender presentation also presents a distinct model of care, some distance from Horace Mann's vision of divine femininity, “head encircled with a halo of heavenly light...feet sweetening the earth on which she treads.” As Amir reflected:

It's interesting, because it's not a maternal care. The traditional image anyway, the whole notion of teaching being basically mothers in a classroom. This is not that kind of a care.

This is a care based on a love of humanity, rather than maternal instincts.

I am not sure how Amir parses maternal love from a love of humanity in Sarah's image. I suspect that in part he is referring to the queerness of her self-portrait in conversation with typical feminine representations of mothers and teachers with long hair and dresses, sweet and demure, rather than sweaty, boastful, and clad in work boots. But I wonder if he is also connecting Sarah's

care to an investment in community—her community of students, queer culture, and queer youth—as opposed to individual conceptions of mother love. This caring labor and intentional linking of “self and community” reflects a care philosophy rooted simultaneously in individual caring relationships and a broader conception of community and justice. This portrait of a teacher and her caring work complicates dominant aesthetic and conceptual representations of teaching and care, presenting a bold non-SNAF countervisuality.

### *the \$nack factory*

Another challenging representation of carework is Michelle’s map of her morning routine. Michelle was the only teacher to draw a spatial map, tracing the first three hours of her day—black pen over pencil under-drawing in a tight semicircle on brown craft paper. The map begins its counter-clockwise turn on the left hand side, an outstretched hand grasping for a ringing phone alarm that reads “5:15.” The pencil outline of an arrow curves down to the next station where we see Michelle’s backpacked figure waiting for the “N train” in the rain → her small profile against the enormous crisscrossed fence of “Western Beef,” which she labels the “\$nack Factory” → in through a metal detector with a sign reading, “no weapons or cellphones” → down through the teacher sign-in book → a copy request form → and the triangled exclamation point of a “printer error,” warning message. During our interview she detailed the onerous bureaucracy of signing in each morning, her school’s paper shortage, and the special printer repair skills she has acquired since joining the school five years ago.

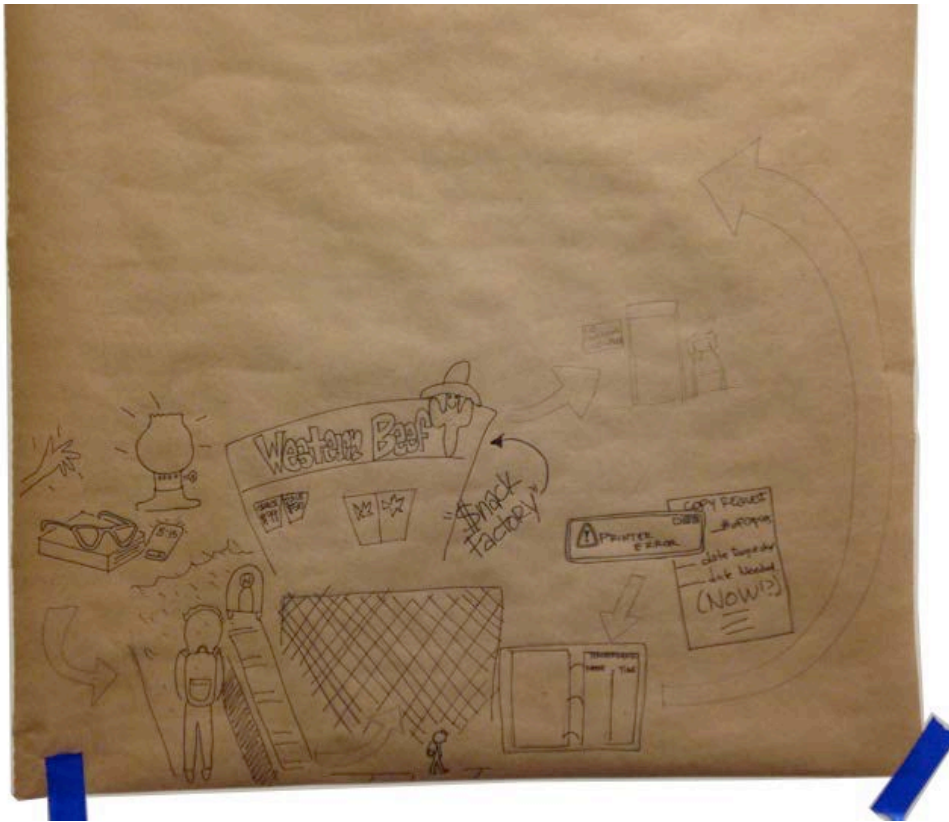


Figure 26. Michelle's Teacher Practice Map

Of the blank top half of the page, she conceded, “This is as far as I got. I could have gone into the day. I think only getting this far, to 8 o'clock in the morning says a lot...how much happens before the kids even arrive, how much you have to do and know and remember.” Her drawing feels like a glimpse into the backstage workings of an actor before curtain. We see all her preparations before the students arrive, the behind the scenes work of readying herself and her supplies for the day. The shifting perspectives in her drawing—zooming in on her sleepily reaching hand, panning out on her neighborhood walk, and looking at the sign-in book as if through her eyes—provide a filmic window into her subjectivity. It is as though, to ground our discussion of teacher work, she is reminding us of her tangible, sensory experiences—tired confusion, the feel of raindrops, frustration with technology—against some disembodied trope of a teacher through the eyes of an evaluator as data, selfless, etc. The open half seems to nod to

the impossibility of representation once the day begins in earnest. Betty, her colleague at Bronx Humanities who joined our interview, agreed:

It makes sense why you stopped at 8. I don't think I would be able to draw one map that describes my day. It could turn into something else (snaps her fingers) like that. One kid could lose his shit, freak out, then all of a sudden the day is 180 degrees different. That's really what happens... I don't think I would ever be able to go past 8:30 one time and summarize it all up. I would not be able to.

Betty's statement alludes to both the "overwhelming number of details," and the unpredictability of events—the sense that irregularity and frequent change are standard. Even with possible train delays and inclement weather, this is the part of the day with consistent rhythm. And while it is choreographed around the shape of school schedules and student needs, this is also Michelle's time.

During our interview, Michelle walked me through each stop on her morning route. When we came to "Western Beef," she explained her regular practice of buying food for students—breakfast every Thursday and snacks one or two other days a week. She talked about how much money she spends at the grocery store and how having snacks around is "a huge deal." I asked her, "What's a big deal about it?"

"I'm thinking about one student," she said. "Really sweet on good days but crash and burn some days. Yeah. My methods of dealing with her, I had to find different ways of dealing with this student. There's definitely a lot of stuff going on with her. Falling asleep in class to me, is *why are you falling asleep in class?* When students do that, not just her, in general... [I wonder] 'What's going on with this? Why are you sleeping in my class?' In maybe my first year of teaching I would have thought I was being boring or whatever. There's so much more to it than that. I think if somebody comes in your room for an evaluation and the kid

is sleeping in class, [they think] 'you were boring, your class sucks.' Or you're not differentiating your instruction. It's not exciting enough for this kid.

Maybe this kid had to work until 2 o'clock in the morning. Who knows what's going on with this kid? I think having an orange or something, [you can say] 'do you need a snack?' It doesn't have to be a big deal. You don't have to go to every kid in the class and have snacks for everybody. Write them a post-it, do you need a snack? 'Yeah, I need a snack because I can't stay awake. I need something.'

I think people feel very differently on this subject. This might be a topic of controversy. Some people may be like 'Well, they got to wake up. Wake them up.' Maybe you're coddling them or something. I don't think it's that... Our school was meant to be a second home for our students in a way...I think that's part of that aspect of teaching. Creating a safe space. Yeah, there's a snack if you need a snack sort of thing.

For Michelle, buying weekly snacks is more than the physical effort, cash expenditure, or time it takes before school. It is very much the invisible work of "feeding the family" that Marjorie DeVault (1994) describes—the planning, shopping, preparing of meals that go into raising children up. It is the effort of making school a "safe space" and a "second home," effort comprised of all the countless large and tiny, often invisible, acts that mothers and motherers do to make a space feel cozy, predictable, provided-for, safe. It is work.

Also demanding is Michelle's emotional work in managing her own ego and reactions—seeing a sleeping student not as a reflection of her boring or inadequate teaching, seeing beyond her own initial pangs of upset or insult, to empathize and examine the student's context. It is the work of creative experimentation—"finding different ways to deal with [challenging] students." It is the empathy of imagining oneself under heavy lids, head slowly tilting to one side. It is physical, emotional, intellectual. It is compassion, presence, and curious care.

When Michelle poses rhetorically, “Maybe this kid had to work until 2 o'clock in the morning. Who knows what's going on with this kid?” she signals another kind of labor—the work of imagining, combing through knowledge of a particular student's life and demands outside the classroom. In the case of Michelle's school and students, there is often a lot going on. Michelle teaches at a transfer school, a category of small “alternative” high schools for “over-age and under-credited” students. The transfer school model, which expanded significantly under Mayor Bloomberg's small school movement, is designed to provide an “academically rigorous” college prep alternative for students who have been “unsuccessful” in traditional schools. Michelle's students are older than typical high school students—ages 16-21. Many, if not most, of them have struggled with school because of social factors related to poverty and systemic oppression—incarceration, violence, and family stresses. So, when Michelle sees a kid dozing off in her class, her response—the choice to set her alarm 15 minutes earlier a few days a week, to spend her own money on classroom provisions, and to gently offer a tired student a snack rather than dispensing punishment—is shaped by the social context of her school and students' lives, all she knows and imagines might be going on with them.

In the narrative above, Michelle describes her changing view of sleeping students—first blaming herself for “being boring,” but learning after year one, “that there's so much more to it than that.” Over time her analysis deepens, shifting focus away from herself to consider all “that's going on with the kid.” However, her statement also references the differing opinions of an imagined other—a principal, assistant principal, or Department of Education official visiting her classroom for a brief observation. This evaluator may blame the sleeping student on Michelle's teaching, critiquing her for “not differentiating enough,” and for “coddling” students by offering them snacks.

These references to being evaluated highlight Michelle's attention to broader school and social dynamics of teacher surveillance and judgment, and her internalization of Foucault's "inspecting gaze" (1980). But her words and actions also signal her rejection of the dominant narrative and her embrace of countervisualities of teacher work and student worthiness. Michelle raises the evaluator scripts to explicitly dispute them, replying, "I don't think it's that (coddling)." Instead, she advances a view of her students as human beings coping with extraordinary challenges, and frames her own work in terms of creating a home-like safe space. Michelle's retort, her refusal to punish students or accept blame, is a form of resistance. She is resisting the dominant discourse about teachers' all-powerful accountability for student academic performance; rejecting the neoliberal ideology that disavows historical and contemporary racism and oppression in favor of a (false) meritocratic ideal of personal responsibility. Her investment of time, funds, mental and emotional work in her students, and her support of them with subtly-passed post-its and granola bars, are radical acts of love, care, resistance, and survival.

“como estoy en mi casa, estoy en mi salon”/ *as i am at home, i am in my classroom*

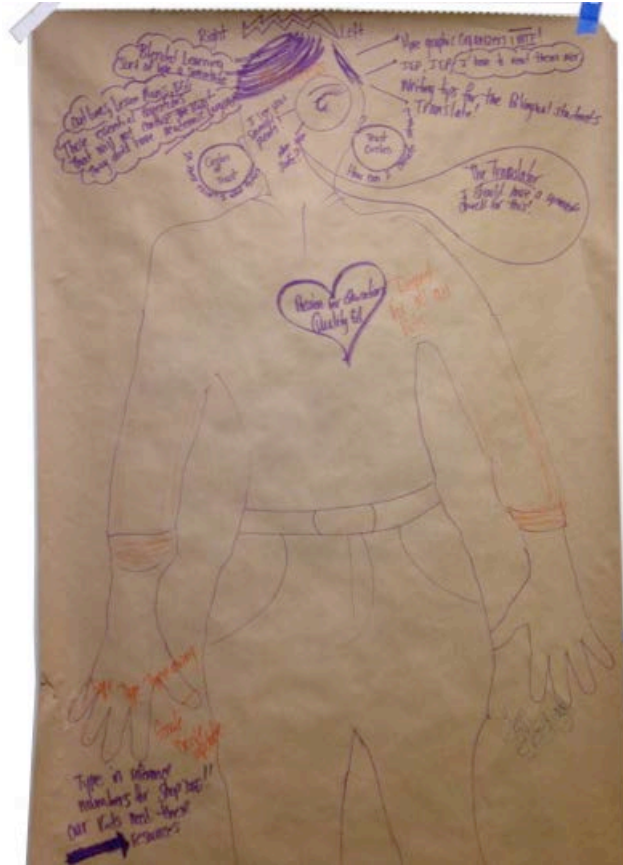


Figure 27. Lee's teacher practice map

Lee's Teacher Practice Map (Figure 27) also frames care in terms of race, culture, social identity and survival. Her drawing is a loosely outlined silhouette of her body from top of head to knees, traced by Amir as she lay on the carpeted floor of our meeting room. The quality of the outer line is a little wobbly, but Lee has embellished the figure adding a belt and pockets to the curvy skinny jeans, rolled shirt-cuffs, and a number of feminine flourishes—a sweep of purple bangs, large hoop earrings captioned with the phrase “circles of trust,” a single cartoon-y vixen eye, and a thick heart at the center of her chest that reads, “passion for education. Quality Ed.” The figure is framed by blocks of text in purple with hints of orange, especially around the outstretched



fingers of her large hands and on either side of her head and across her face. When Lee, a Boricua Spanish teacher and my co-facilitator for the ItAG, spoke about her map during our interview she focused on the blue text, below her left hand—the words, “clean everything,” emphasized with underlines and an exclamation point. She explained what cleaning her school space means to her and why she does it:

Oh, okay. *Y vale* [OK]. This is, for me, besides being an educator, and lesson planning, and keeping everything organized, I usually find that the classrooms have to be spotless. You know? It's just, it's an area where you're going to learn, so it should be clean, right? To make a long story short, I clean all the things.

I'm going to tell you something. I think it has a lot to do with where I'm coming from. Not all students, because I don't want to generalize, but many of our students from urban schools come from certain neighborhoods that this doesn't exist, so providing them with an area where this exists is respecting them as students and as people. You know? Because they're not being respected outside of their home. In the neighborhood, and maybe even in their home. It's just a skill that helps them be organized themselves, so they're coming into class like, "Wow, everything's nice, and bright, and clean. I deserve this." Yes, you do. You deserve this. You deserve more than this. You know? So this is why I like to maintain my class clean.

For Lee cleaning her classroom is part of a ritual of professionalism. She says, “it's an area where you're going to learn, so it should be clean,” suggesting a link between cleanliness and learning, as though the clean space communicates the seriousness of the task, or is a pre-requisite to good work. It is also a part as she says, of “where (she's) coming from.” Later in our interview, she explains, “*Como estoy en mi casa, estoy en mi salon.*” (As I am at home, I am in my classroom.) I cannot be a teacher without exposing who I am.” She connects cleaning to deeply held practices

and roots as a Latina woman. She says that sometimes she “want(s) to break that stereotype of the female teacher—nurturing, keeping everything nice and clean,” but she cannot. Cleaning is part of where she comes from as a woman, a mother, *Puertorriqueña*, and as someone who also came up in neighborhoods where public investment in cleanliness and community were lacking.

For Lee, a clean classroom models good organization for students and communicates their worth—you deserve *this and more than this*—you deserve a clean, organized environment, the time and labor involved in making the space tidy—just as you deserve respect in your home, neighborhood, and school, and people who believe in you. It is also a way of bringing her authentic self as a Latina—even as she bristles against the stereotype—to her students or *pollitos* (little chickens), as she often lovingly refers to them. Like the other examples, this act of cleaning, invisible to administrators and policy makers, evaluation rubrics and test scores, requires time, physical labor, planning, empathy and some of the extra burdens that come from helping children navigate societal oppression.

As DeVault (1999) writes about in her study of emotion work in family life, “Another task for some is helping family members survive a racist society...Much of [this work] looks straightforward and ordinary, simply a matter of loving attention...but such loving attention acquires special significance when care and respect outside the family cannot be taken for granted” (p.58). In this way, Lee’s cleaning takes on an emotional valence and added urgency because her own clean classroom must serve as counterweight to the public disinvestment in these students’ communities and the layers of racism that her 97% Black, Latinx, and Asian student-body population faces. Her cleaning is one tangible part of a “radical healing” pedagogy (Ginwright 2009, 2016) that seeks to promote wellbeing and build hope among her students—modeling good organization, high standards, and affirming their worthiness.

In the excerpt above, Lee explains that her approach to cleaning has a lot to do with “where she’s coming from,” but when she elaborates in the next sentence she describes instead the neighborhoods where many of her students live, spaces where they may not be shown the respect of a tidy environment. I am not sure if this slippage from one sentence to the next references a sense of shared identity with the students as a woman of color who also lives in a neighborhood fraught with historical disinvestment—a shared conception of where they (she and her students) are coming from geographically and socially—or perhaps her students’ home neighborhoods and circumstances are separate and adjacent to her own Latina identity as motherer and nurturer. In either case, Lee’s classroom cleaning is deeply linked with both her own identity and that of her students. This cleaning carework is a way of showing up authentically for them, communicating care, helping them to learn organization, and creating a daily visual demonstration of both their value and her commitment. Whether or not male teachers or white teachers at mostly white, middle class schools tidy their classrooms, the work has different meaning and emotional weight here outside of the SNAWS (Standard North American White Student) context. For Lee and her students, this every day ritual is a tool of both resistance and survival in a society that consistently denies the value of Black and Brown lives.

*“looking at myself through the eyes of students”*

Eli’s drawing presents a distinct image of teacher work and care. Instead of drawing a whole figure, his map depicts a torso—top of neck, broad shoulders slanting out from the center and a slightly crumpled tie dangling three-fourths of the way down the page. The collared shirt, loosened at the top button, and tie are masculine signifiers in a profession where the workforce and image culture is dominated by women and feminine symbols. In contrast to most of the other maps (although not Amir’s, the other male participant) where teachers wrote in small font,

describing their work in phrases or sentences, Eli's text—primarily single words or couplets—is printed in large block letters. The words themselves are broader, more general and less specific than the other maps too. Two dyads graze each shoulder: “endurance/ fatigue” and “fortitude/ weariness” suggesting the weight of the work (on his shoulders), and its magnitude.

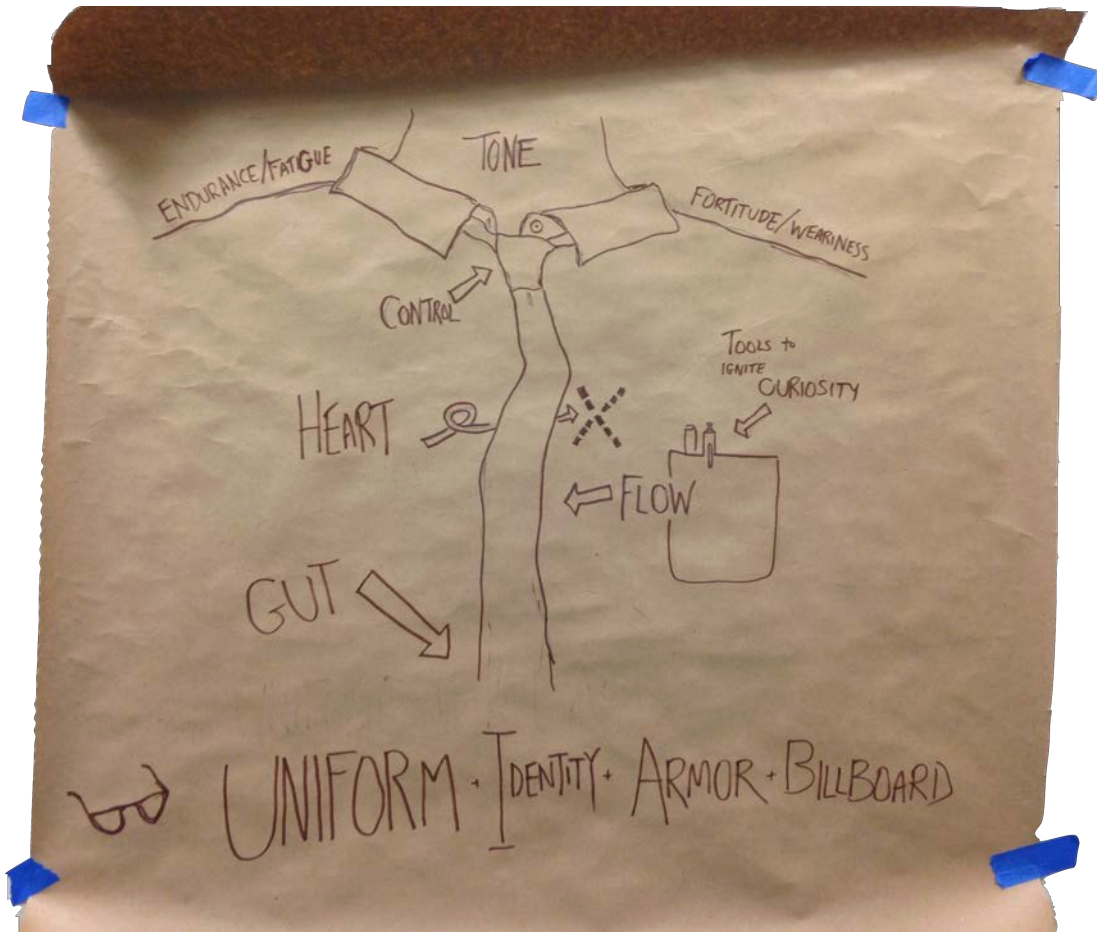


Figure 28. Eli's Teacher Practice Map

The word “tone” marks the center of the throat and in smaller letters below an arrow pointing up from “control” gestures to the knot of the tie. “Heart” (although pointing to a dotted “x” rather than the Valentine’s heart depicted by Lee, Nisha or Rebecca or V’s anatomical image), “flow” and “gut” zigzag down on either side of the tie and at the lower left a pair of glasses followed by the words, “UNIFORM + IDENTITY + ARMOR + BILLBOARD,” frame the bottom edge. The text

and imagery is reminiscent of symbols for other professions like the double snakes of the medical caduceus or the square and compass insignia of the free masons, a group which he likens to teaching in his discussion of Lee's image, noting that like the masons, teaching is "lasting and ancient." However, he elides traditional symbols of teacher work—tropes like the chalkboard, apple, book, diploma—or words associated with school or teaching—curricula, lessons, pedagogy, students, etc. The only nods to conventional teacher imagery are the glasses and writing implements emerging from the shirt pocket, labeled, "tools to ignite curiosity."

Before speaking with Eli, much of the drawing was opaque to me. I saw the masculine signifiers as his own emblems (he usually came to our meetings in a tie), and as communicating a kind of officiousness about teaching work, but I did not understand many of the words. Did they refer to his own identity or his students' identities? Was the word "uniform" meant to connote dress or sameness? What about armor? Billboard? Flow? What did he mean to communicate through these terms? I was eager to learn more about his intentions. Over thin-crust pizza in his North Brooklyn neighborhood, he began to explain his thinking:

When I did the map I remember that I really wanted to get to the center of who I present myself as to my students. I started this with, 'what are my students looking at every day? What are they seeing?' Because I wanted to map what I do truly through the lens of how I think about it and every day that I teach I think, what are they seeing, what are they experiencing? I hope that's what great teachers do... When I think of myself as a teacher I'm looking at myself through the eyes of students as much as I can.

Eli frames his map as a form of double vision, looking at himself as himself and as his students see him at the same time—what he does through the lens of how he thinks about it, which is habitually focused on what students perceive. For Eli, this mode of seeing and self-reflection—which he identifies as a core practice of great teaching—is intertwined. His dialogic representation

conveys an awareness of what students see, and the empathic work of imagining their angle of vision on him. One important part of what they see is his daily “uniform” (a reference to costume as opposed to uniformity). As he explained:

First of all I try to dress in a manner that says that what we're doing here is important and deserves a certain decorum from me and I have chosen that that's going to include me wearing a tie and relatively well pressed clothes. Shoe polish when I can get to it. I'm going to be equipped.

This is a little like acknowledging all the preparatory work of Michelle's morning routine—tying his tie, putting on the glasses, tools in pocket, voice exercises—and also similar to the intentions of Lee's classroom cleaning. Eli's shirt and tie are a symbol of professionalism and the seriousness of the work. But his focus on dress has a different resonance than either Sarah's “bat signal for LGBT students” or the way other female teachers talked about the discomfort of students commenting on their bodies or clothes, imagining them as a “cool older sister,” “sexy,” or as “mother types.” Eli's sartorial presentation is like a hip, low-key version of a businessman. This is an intentional reference that he takes up in his active blog, tag-lined in block letters across a photo of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, a pair of black-framed glasses, and an open-faced slice of avocado toast (another set of hip, masculine symbols) with a slogan about the power of teaching in “the market.” Eli is a veteran teacher, serving his fifteenth year, and a committed cheerleader for the profession. He takes pride in mentoring new teachers and, in addition to his blog and Twitter presence, has recently begun to take on regular public speaking gigs at conferences and universities on topics that link teaching with entrepreneurship. He is an actor and rock musician, interested in performance and social media, with a keen awareness of visual messaging.

On his blog and in his Teacher Practice Map, Eli seems to be rebranding teaching as well as “rethinking” it. He takes up a visual grammar of (white) coolness, class privilege, and masculinity

and leverages the social power of these symbols to communicate the gravity and importance of teaching work. These signs and metaphors are in conversation with and opposition to critics and dominant discourses that view teaching as women's work and therefore unserious, and brand teachers as poor, feminine, dowdy, and unimaginative.

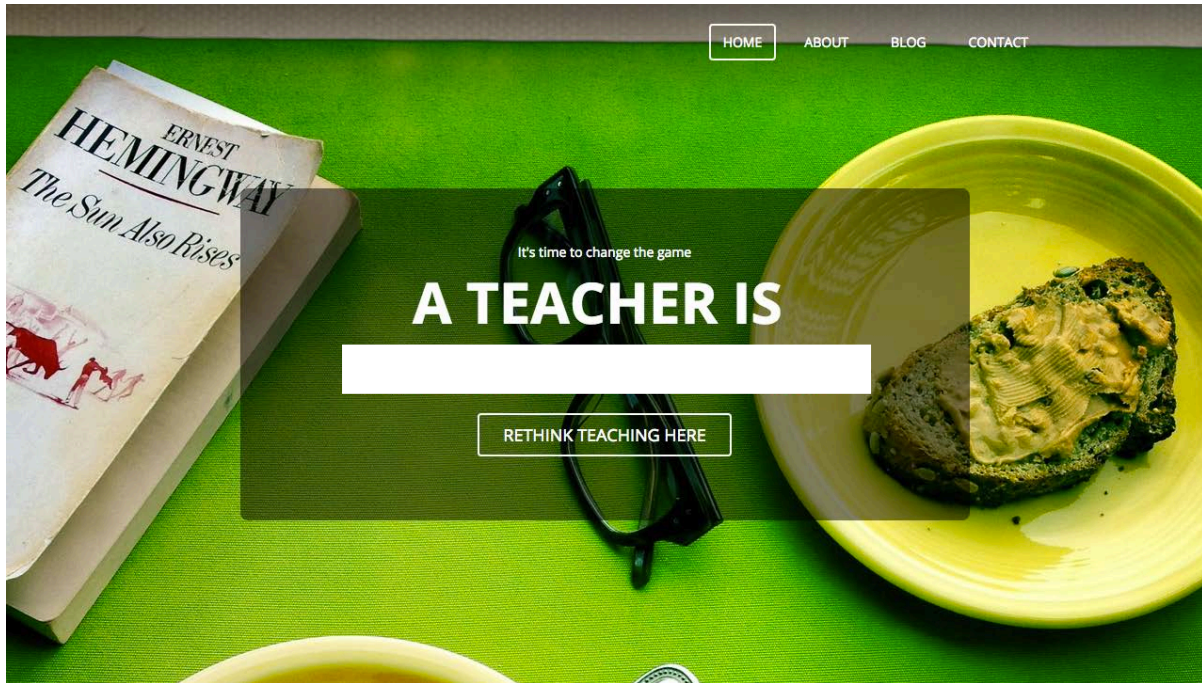


Figure 29 Eli's Blog homepage (text whited-out to protect anonymity)

Looking at his shirt, tie and broad shoulders I wonder if, for Eli, visually depicting the value of teaching work also means stripping away feminine signifiers. I also wonder if or how these symbols of teacher power include, or inadvertently leave out the other female, queer, and non-white educators who comprise a majority of the teaching force (and our ItAG group).

In his online writing, public speaking, during our ItAG group meetings and our individual interview, Eli consistently affirms the value of teaching work, supporting other group members, praising their insights, and speaking broadly about the profession with deep reverence. As he elaborated during our interview:

I think we have a really serious job. Like capital 'S' serious job. We all get it and we all have an earnestness to it, but truly any day could be the day where you drastically change someone else's life forever. Add echo effect...We are holding people's lives in our hands... We really can impact some children where they live in a way no one else can and maybe no one else ever could. They're at a time in their lives when somebody saying to them, 'we are all wearing masks' [is very meaningful]. 'Your mask isn't crazy because it's a mask. You'd be crazy if you didn't think you were wearing a mask.' That's adolescence. That's one of the big five things you gotta get out of adolescence, and if you get it, you're going to be fine.

Eli brings the seriousness of his regard for teaching to the way he talks about it. He uses phrases like "drastically change someone else's life forever" and "holding people's lives in our hands," typically reserved for anti-terrorism agents or transplant surgeons. He concedes to his dramatic language with the comedic interlude, "add echo effect," but his intention is wholly earnest. I think many of the other ItAG participants, and teachers in general, would concur with the importance and social value of teaching work. And several of the teachers shared stories during group meetings or interviews about their own work with suicidal students, children in extreme poverty facing dangerous violence or abuse, in potentially life-saving terms. However, these stories about teacher work stand in sharp contrast to the example Eli provides about the adolescent awareness of our social "masks." His discussion of masks calls to mind the angst of American teenagehood. Questions like who am I? Challenges around belonging and fitting in, fakeness, authenticity and self-acceptance. These are real struggles for most American teens and can surely have long-lasting and potentially very serious consequences (including self-harm, eating disorders, physical and emotional impacts).



However, I wonder if Lee or Michelle or Sarah or any of the other nine teachers working at schools with mostly poor, mostly Black and Brown students might discuss this adolescent phenomenon differently. Perhaps in conversation with stereotypes, masks that are imposed on us through structures of racism, patriarchy, and oppression and that we in turn, impose on others? It is also hard to imagine that in the context of the challenges many of the other nine teachers' students face around poverty, homophobia, mass incarceration, threats of deportation, police brutality, and Islamophobia that any of the other teachers would prioritize the message of our masks as a top five lesson of adolescence, nor might they have the confidence that gaining this insight would assure their students' safety and wellbeing, or promise that they are "going to be fine."

Eli demonstrated his caring approach to teaching work in his words and visual representations, in the empathic work of seeing himself "through the eyes of students," in his commitment to breaking through with hard-to-reach youth, in the great care he takes with his own practice and with supporting and mentoring other teachers. Without ever setting foot in Eli's classroom, I imagine that Eli is a provocative, challenging, engaging, caring, present teacher for his students. My aim in singling out Eli's images and narratives here is to highlight the substantial differences in identity, politics, and social context between his students, and therefore his work, and those of the other teacher participants.

Table 12. School demographics of teacher participants

SCHOOL	STUDENTS OF COLOR	FREE / REDUCED LUNCH	STUDENTS WHO GRADUATE IN 4 YEARS
BRONX HUMANITIES	98%	85%	20%
CLINTON TECH	97%	79%	73%
MEDIA ARTS + DESIGN	96%	100%	74%
NEWCOMER HS	90% (86% EMERGING BILINGUALS)	83%	54%
SCHOLAR'S PREP	99%	100%	NA (MIDDLE SCHOOL)
SHORELINE HS	13%	0%	94%

I hold up the contrast of Eli's image and narrative to affirm the links, as with Sarah and Michelle and Lee's maps, between social context—his own social location as a white, hetero man with the race, class, and cultural composition of his students—and the shape of his teaching work and care. Eli's image is also a reflection of his subjectivity and that of his students. This means that his students, their needs, and his teaching carework look different (than in non-SNAW contexts), and in some ways, different also means less.<sup>68</sup> When students comment on his outfit, it does not necessarily lead to discussions about sexuality as it often does for Sarah. Eli may also purchase food for students in his class and employ creative strategies around drowsy kids like Michelle, but he does not imagine or contend with the same back-stories that have likely led to student fatigue. He may tidy his room, but he does not worry that the cleanliness of his space will be seen by youth as a reflection of their worthiness. Noddings talks about these differences in terms of

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<sup>68</sup> Significantly, this does not imply that Eli's teaching work or the work of teaching privileged white children is not also demanding/ multifaceted/ emotional/ taxing/ rooted in a different set of challenging social dynamics (such as the pressures of competition, or the confusion of worth with achievement in upper-middle class contexts). However, it is (as a rule!), not as demanding as working in schools that serve mostly students of color, and mostly students living in economic poverty. This distinction reminds me of the challenge that many white people have in understanding white privilege. "But my life is hard," they say. "But I work hard for what I have," they say. *Yes it is and yes you do.* The facts of systemic social oppression and inequality do not negate the suffering or hard work of white people or rich people, but they do order them. They say, "Hey buddy, it could be more/ harder." That is part of what I am trying to show via Eli's example.

“overwhelming needs.” She shares a quote from an eleven year-old girl who is suffering physical abuse at home and provides the following analysis:

It is hard to imagine this youngster feeling a need to learn arithmetic when her basic needs for love and safety have not been met... All of her energy is going into enduring, worrying, covering up and inviting new emotional wounds through the means she has chosen to cover up the physical ones. I am not arguing here for a rigid hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954). Often, basic needs and needs associated with self-actualization co- exist, and some deeply troubled children relieve their anxieties by immersing themselves in schoolwork. But, more often, needy children simply cannot concentrate well enough to learn.

All kinds of real, pressing needs overwhelm the academic ones we so easily infer for schoolchildren. Homelessness, poverty, toothaches, faulty vision, violence, fear of rebuke or mockery, sick or missing parents, and feelings of worthlessness all get in the way of the learning deemed important by school people. (2007, pg.151)

As Noddings rightly reflects, primal and pressing concerns may overwhelm academic needs, and while any child may experience a toothache, sick parent, or insecurity, overwhelming needs are more prevalent for the mostly poor, mostly Black and Brown students at urban non-SNAW schools. It is important to acknowledge at once that teachers at non-SNAW schools have greater care burdens. Their burdens may also sometimes reflect a different attitude towards care, as in anti-racist curricula, or Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus’s 2006 notion of the Latinx value of *personalismo*, or a focus on personal relationships. The lives of these non-SNAW students and the work of teaching and caring for them is much more nuanced, richer, rewarding, complex, joyful than the burden.

One final distinction between Eli's carework, as depicted through his Teacher Practice Map, and those of the other nine teachers is that care in a non-SNAW context is often if not always connected to larger social forces. In this way carework is social justice work both because it is linked with broader dynamics of structural oppression, such as homophobia, intergenerational poverty, and the conditions of racialized urban neighborhoods. Also, caring for Black and Brown bodies—selves and others—is a form of healing justice and, as Audre Lorde famously declared, “an act of political warfare.” In the context of de-contextualized neoliberal school discourses that predict, systematically track, quantify, and message the failures of Black and Brown students; in the social facts of racism, inequality, mass incarceration and state-sanctioned white supremacy; in the context of “the condition of Black life,” which Claudia Rankine (2015) describes as a state of perpetual “mourning,” care and justice are inseparable. As Ginwright affirms:

In communities ravaged by violence, crime and poverty, care is perhaps one of the most revolutionary antidotes to urban trauma because care ultimately facilitates healing and a passion for justice. Without such investments in caring relationships, young people internalize trauma which can hinder their capacity to transform the very conditions that created it. Care within the black community is as much a political act as it is a personal gesture because it requires that the relationship prepare black youth to confront racism and view their personal trauma as a result of systemic social problems. (2010, p.84)

The care of these teacher/activists against society's mountain of messages that their Black, Brown, LGBT, immigrant, Muslim, poor students' lives do not matter, is a radical labor of love, healing, and social justice.

## CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION

### QUESTIONS AND PROVOCATIONS

*The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions that have been hidden by the answers.*

James Baldwin 1962

This quote says so much, so concisely about what good art can do—push us outside of comfortable spaces, into new frames, turn questions and answers on their heads. It also has particular resonance in the context of contemporary teacher evaluation policy, a driver in the production of certainties. Buttressed by the authority of decimal point numbers, “over our head” algorithms, and the aesthetic grammars of data visualization, these answers form a self-referential and self-reinforcing logic that is difficult to penetrate. This is the market logic that Poovey (2001) describes as “tautological,” explaining that “once one accepts any of its premises, all its presuppositions and conclusions come pouring in, like the flood that follows the proverbial first drop” (p.399). The worldview of neoliberal school accountability at times feels so thorough and extensive that it fills all the available cracks like puffy yellow foam insulation plugging up even the spaces from which we can imagine alternatives.

This circular ideology of value-added rests on a particular notion of personal responsibility that has found a receptive home in the meritocratic philosophy of public schooling. Leonardo (2007) calls this a “pull yourself up by your own schoolstraps,” ethos—the a-historical, purportedly colorblind idea that with hard work and grit, all students have equal opportunities to achieve. In society and in schools, the personal responsibility frame imagines the ideal student/ teacher/

citizen/ subject along a series of SNAF assumptions—white, middle class, heterosexual, male, American-born—he is “homo economicus,” independent, unencumbered, and *carefree* in his need for and responsibility to others. But this notion of the rational, self-interested actor who serves as the basis for economic models, and to a large extent school and social policy, is undermined by the other-centered logics of care. As Lynch elaborates (2007, p.16),

It is arguable that love labour is essentially other-centred in that it is directed in the first instance by the good of the other rather than the good of the self. It often has little marginal gain for the carer in either the short or longer term and may in fact involve a net loss to them financially, socially or emotionally.

The caring work that the teacher/activists depict in their drawings and narratives does come with substantial personal costs in terms of time, money, and emotional investment. Sarah’s support group, Michelle’s classroom snacks, Lee’s tidying, and Eli’s empathic attention to seeing what the kids see, requires showing up early and staying late, difficult conversations and painful reflections, a portion of the biweekly paycheck set aside. These daily acts of care are largely unseen and unrecognized by school administrators (or society at large), absent from evaluation ratings, invisible in the space of fifteen-minute classroom observations, undetectable in the value-added calculations of student test scores over time.

The quantified and commodified accountability measures of value-added are incommensurate with the nature and value of the teachers’ visual and narrative depictions of their work and care. While certain elements of teachers’ carework might be called out or documented for evaluation, much of this work is not quantifiable, and defies both measurement and standardization. As Lynch (2007, p.25) writes of love, care, and solidarity labor,

Because they have an other-centred dimension to their character, they cannot be entirely marketised without undermining their care or solidarity purposes. One of the distinguishing features of love labour relations...is that they are not commodifiable.

While Michelle might be reimbursed for the purchase of classroom provisions (although the proposition seems unlikely at a school where paper is being rationed in April), it's hard to record or measure her trial and error process of supporting a challenging student, or the development of her snack technique over time. We can't quantify her gentle nudge of the post-it or the attention she pays through observation, conversations with colleagues, and chatting with the student after class to figure out "what's going on" in the student's personal life and what kind of circumstances are causing her to fall asleep in class. We can't measure how V's relationship with the student she apologized to grows over time or continues long after he has moved on from her course (as with Rebecca's in Chapter 5). We can't calculate the impact of Sarah's queer modeling on LGBTQ students who are without other examples or family support. The personal investment, relationality, and emotional quality of this work makes it hard to measure or systematically enforce. As if reducing a large fraction, dividing the numerators and denominators by factors of  $x$  and then  $y$ , crossing out all the parts of carework we can buy and measure and sell, there is still a fraction left at the end, a unique, irreducible quantity that, like love and care, cannot be wholly commodified.

Poovey (2001) contends that in response to the circular logic of marketization, "it is necessary for us to develop and circulate concepts that belong to an equally tautological logic." She argues that, "even if there are no things that money can't buy we have to insist that there ought to be—even if only to hold open a space for experiences and sensations whose value we cannot presently conceptualize" (p.399). The teacher/ activists' carework proposes another system of value and set of priorities, a calculus outside of the neoliberal racial capitalist framework, a value

system that is not wholly reducible. Their nuanced conceptions of students' worthiness, and their investments of time, money, and emotion in relational caring work, locate value beyond pie charts and the educational market of scores. Their carework resists the narrowing logics of neoliberal value-added—it is a thing that money can't buy.

### *IN / VISIBILITIES*

*It is not so much that we evaluate images but that they introduce new forms of value into the world, contesting our criteria, forcing us to change our minds... Images are not just passive entities that co-exist with their human hosts. They change the way we think and see and dream. They re-function our memories and imaginations, bringing new criteria and new desires into the world.*

W. J. T. Mitchell, 2002

I have argued that images of teacher evaluation (and teacher value) represented through scores and plotted on charts, graphs and rubrics have had a profound impact on shaping what matters in education and how society views teachers' contributions, capacities, and worth. Media images affect the way that school stakeholders and the public at large think about teaching and learning, and in turn influence school policies and practices. Dominant, quantified depictions of teacher work and school life have constructed a series of data-visualized certainties that shape the terrain of what is both hyper-visible and hard to "think and see and dream" (Mitchell 2005) in teacher practice. My research shines a light on the visual landscape of teacher labor as a mode of critical analysis and to open up space for new dreams and questions. Across chapters and interviews, sketches and assemblages, this work has asked: *What is made in/visible by the answers of neoliberal education policy and value-added teacher evaluation? How can art-making and visual analysis offer new ways of seeing (and knowing and dreaming) teacher work? And what new questions grow from the teachers' words and images?* Speaking to and through these questions



and sightlines<sup>69</sup>, I have offered several critical insights on the shape, framing, and social conditions of teachers' invisible work.

We have seen the concept of invisible work take form in the interwoven loops between (literal) visibility and the social location/ construction of workers and particular forms of labor. Teachers spoke and drew, gathered digital files, and took photos of many different kinds of invisible work. Some of the work was invisible because it is interior—thinking, feeling, planning, reflecting; other work lives outside of the rubricized observations and test score algorithms of teacher and student evaluations; still other work is invisible because it is considered fun or pleasurable, and therefore not work. And especially important within a capitalist logic, it is invisible because it is not remunerated.

Nearly all of the invisible work that teachers wrote and drew and spoke about is caring labor. This “carework in a generous sense” (a phrase I adapted from Smith’s broad definition of labor and discussed at length in Chapter Four) goes beyond white feminized models of nurturance to include practices as varied as pedagogical differentiation, queer modeling, advocacy, and classroom cleaning. Many of these tasks do not immediately look like carework and are not intrinsically caring practices. Rather, they are characterized by Nisha’s notion of “interplay,” a dynamic, relational orientation to teaching work.

In writing about invisible work, I have endeavored to trace the sightlines, to situate subjects and objects—*who/ what is invisible to whom/ what?* The teachers wrote and made art about their work being invisible to partners and friends, colleagues, and even to themselves. However, they spoke

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<sup>69</sup> I use the phrase “sightlines” to suggest a situated way of seeing that locates invisibility to a particular structure/ policy/ body/ space.

most about a *structural* form of invisibility— about their work being invisible to school accountability policies like “Danielson,” standardized testing practices, an imagined “public,” and sometimes administrators who seemed to stand in as figureheads for these broader constructs. These structural dynamics of seeing and not seeing pivot around issues of race, class, and gender—namely the gendered dynamics of teaching and the unacknowledged assumptions of race and class written into educational policies and cultures.

As I argued in Chapter Three, with a 76% female labor force (Ingersoll et al. 2014), teaching work is still women’s work. The invisibility of teachers’ carework rests on a set of well-worn scripts about care and nurturance as “natural” female dispositions, post-industrial capitalist designations that frame “domestic”, caring labor as “not work”, and the social devaluation of work that women do. The historical political economic and social dynamics that I recount in the early feminization of teaching (Chapter Three)—issues of proletarianization and deskilling, competing and contradictory social expectations—persist in schools, policies, and social discourses today. Teachers’ caring labor remains invisible to education policies, evaluation frameworks, and to a broader public because it is regarded as both too small and too big—simultaneously not serious or challenging enough to count as work, while also too important (sentimentalized) to be labeled as labor. Meanwhile, as I affirm in my review of the academic literature and contemporary teacher activist discourses (Chapter Three), a gendered analysis of teaching has largely faded from view.

The teachers’ carework is also rendered invisible through the racial capitalist logics that construct educational stakeholders, policies, and labor as white, middle class, and monolingual (English) (a concept which I have taken up/ updated through the language of Smith’s notion of the Standard North American Family or SNAF). As I have argued (Chapters Five and Six), the teachers’ work is

profoundly shaped by context, both teachers' own intersectional social positions as well as those of their students and school communities. The caring labor that the teachers depicted in words and images is rooted in the social dynamics of teaching in urban schools with 90 to 99% Students of Color and 83 to 100% poor students. The work they described—work like translating for families, standing up to the school's security apparatus, frequent home phone calls, and purchasing food for students in need—is intimately linked with race, class, and cultural contexts (their own and their students), and wholly invisible to policies and structures that center whiteness<sup>70</sup> as the unacknowledged norm. The teachers' carework remains invisible to school policies (NCLB, RTTT, Advance) committed to a "colorblind" meritocratic ideology. This "neoliberal multicultural" ethos (Melamed 2015) targets the "achievement gap" (read: the failure of non-white students) without providing any structural analysis of or redress to systemic oppression or historical and contemporary inequities, and further punishes students, teachers, and schools (of color) for failing to achieve within an impossibly rigged system.

These dynamics of invisibility are like Orner, Miller & Ellsworth's theory of "excessive moments and the educational discourses that try to contain them" (1996). Their notion of "excessive moments" (which I mobilized in the [digital assemblage](#)) draws our attention to invisibilities—those narratives, theories, experiences, and feelings on the edges of educational discourse, and also to the situated "histories of repression" that contain some moments and excise others. As they write, "What becomes contained by an educational discourse and what becomes...excessive to it is no accident." In other words, what we see and don't see in educational spaces and in teacher work, what we notice, what we deem "un/important" is shaped by dominant social structures. Excesses and invisibilities in teacher practice are socially and historically constructed in the alignment of

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<sup>70</sup> And whiteness as a code for middle class status, heteronormative family structure, monolingual (English), not disabled, etc.

teaching with women's work and the private/ public split that framed women's work as less (demanding, important, skilled, etc.). They are situated in the white-normed models of student and teacher that can't anticipate the incessant requests of Lee's colleagues for her to translate letters and call Spanish-speaking parents. They are rooted in long histories, policies, and discourses that mark both women, and people of color as simultaneously, too much—too loud, too wild, too demanding, too emotional—and not enough—invisible and unimportant.

*the view from somewhere: countervisualities*

The teacher/ activists redraw the boundaries of educational discourse and teacher practice, centering a situated, relational angle on their work. As I have shown (Chapters Five and Six), their words and images bring forward “excessive” identities, social contexts, and the raced-, gendered-, and classed dimensions of their multifaceted carework. Their stories and representations reject the dominant “visualities” (Mirzoeff 2010) of teacher evaluation as certain, objective, and unbiased. Whereas the value-added charts and graphs of *Grading the Teachers* (see Chapter One) portray teachers, students and schools in a “god’s-eye-view” (Haraway 1988) constellation of scores, percentages, and demographics, the teachers depict situated, particular and profoundly embodied work. Through stories, body maps, and photographic angles, they bring us as readers/ viewers/ seers into the sensory experiences of their daily labor—the exhaustion, the quality of light, the heft of bags and supplies, the inner soundtrack of silent self-reflective questions that accompany a class lecture. This embodied assertion works against invisible standards of whiteness, middle-classness, and concepts of “American identity” to excavate the uneven terrain of schools (the incommensurability of majority white, privileged suburban institutions with low-resourced majority Black and Brown urban sites) and to situate teaching in particular spaces/ neighborhoods/ conditions, and among particular people/ bodies/ relationships.

The teachers' bodily claims alongside my own embodied art practice ([digital assemblage](#)) are also arguments for ways of knowing, learning, and kinds of intelligences outside of school accountability metrics. In their orientations to the interplay of teaching—links between physical labor, pedagogy, and emotion work; in Lee's "classroom cleaning", V's "cleansing breath," and Sarah's "fashion role model" footwear, the teachers center their own "excessive practices" of pedagogy and care beyond academic and evaluative frames, as relational forms of "body knowledge" (Springgay 2008). And in my digital assemblage, [rubbing every object and surface in Betty's math classroom](#), I both tether (a portion of) my study to the particular space of Betty's room, and also foreground situated, sensory modes of research—the "tactile epistemology" (Marks 2000) of learning and knowing through intimacy and physical contact. These words and images—mine and the teachers'—reject the visualities of neoliberal logics and assert their own "right[s] to look, ...right[s] to be seen" ( Mirzoeff 2011, p.1) and new frames for imagining teaching, care, pedagogy, research, seeing, knowing and mattering in school spaces.

## PROVOCATIONS

The teachers' stories and images of carework paint over the facile answers of value-added ratings in thick gesso strokes, as if priming a new space on an open canvas to ask questions about what teacher work means, entails, looks and feels like. Their frames of care, relationality, and community engagement don't yet have answers—but they draw our eyes to new and better questions. Rather than implications (defined as "the conclusion that can be drawn from something, although it is not explicitly stated"), I want to offer a series of provocations ("something that provokes, arouses, or stimulates")— playful wonderings and "radical possibilities" (Anyon 2005) that grow from the questioning field of my study. In particular, I will play with and turn over the

following question: *how do we make teachers' carework visible in teacher preparation/ teacher evaluation/ and educational research?*

*desire-based teacher preparation*

*How do we make teachers' carework visible in teacher preparation?*

The teachers' images and narratives suggest a paradigm shift in the way we think about teaching work and teacher preparation. Their frames of interconnected, culturally-relevant care point to new educational models, joining subject-specific academic training with an explicit study of relational work. What tools and frames for relationship-building and social analysis might education borrow from community organizing or ethnography or social work? How might a teacher preparation course on *Adolescent English Education* take new shapes as *Adolescent English Education and Culturally-Relevant Care*? How might the readings, assignments, class discussions, and central questions change if the aims were to link content with relationship and community-building, community activism, and students' social-emotional wellbeing?

Another facet of teacher education raised by the teacher/ activists is the misalignment between social/ policy structures, expectations and the preparation of teachers working in urban schools (or any schools that serve low income communities and students of color). Teacher education must decenter whiteness (and SNAF assumptions) while bringing forward a desire-based approach to "understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" in marginalized communities (Tuck 2009, p.416). How can we prepare teachers for teaching outside of the SNAF imaginary (to be partners and allies as opposed to saviors)? What should new teachers know if they are going to teach Black/ Latinx/ immigrant/ Muslim/ emergent bilingual students? Not only about how to support them or discipline them or deliver the content effectively, but what histories, what theories, what political economies, what art and emotion?

In the conclusion to *Ghetto Schooling* (1997), Jean Anyon cautioned, “Attempting to fix inner-city schools without fixing the city in which they are embedded is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door” (p. 168). The teachers’ caring labor pivots around a range of economic conditions and social policies in and outside of education—immigration policies and the rise in deportations, broken windows policing and the racialized over-use of stop and frisk, systemic disinvestment in low income communities of color, housing and homelessness, and a vanishing social welfare system. To recognize and value their caring labor is to call out the complex entanglements of schools with families, “care chains” (Hochschild 2000), and social and economic policy. How might we imagine a 26-credit program aimed at teaching within the studied “air” of U.S. macroeconomic and urban social policy?

*teacher evaluation (a need-to-know-more stance)*

*How do we make teachers’ carework visible in teacher evaluation?*

We think we know what teachers do, in part because most of us have sat in teacher-run classrooms for large chunks of our lives (Blaine 2014) and also, as I have argued, because as “women’s work,” in a field dominated by women workers, the scope and complexity of teaching is diminished in the public imagination. But as the teacher participants made clear, there is a vast gap between the public perception of their work (in policy, discourse, and among their social circles) and their own embedded experiences. What if the design of teacher assessment was guided by a spirit of inquisitiveness?

Writing of her use of photography with young people in her longitudinal visual ethnography, *Children Framing Childhood*, Luttrell suggests, “my goal is to create a ‘need-to-know-more’ stance towards children as knowing subjects and to appreciate the limits of what we can see, know, and claim to understand” (2010, p.225). Part of making teachers’ carework visible is recognizing the

“limits of what we can see, know, and claim to understand” about the complex work of teaching and learning—first because some of this work leaves no visible trace; and also because intersectional gendered histories and discourses diminish women’s work and make it structurally hard to see.

What is clear is that the answer to how to make teachers’ carework visible in teacher assessment is not to enact rigid monitoring structures (family call logs, documentation of student interactions, etc.); add new domains and subdomains to the Danielson rubric (the classroom observation protocol that I discuss at length in Chapter Five); or impose new standardized tests to measure students’ social-emotional learning or “grit” as has been done in California (Zernike 2016). If the answer is not to quantify a particular vision or enactment of care, then perhaps we can imagine teacher evaluation as a learning tool (for teachers to learn about and improve their own practice, for administrators and policy makers to learn more about the many shapes and contexts of teacher work). We might begin by reducing teachers’ instruction hours—a whopping 1050 annually in U.S. secondary schools compared to the OECD average of 658 (OECD 2012)—to make space for professional development or teacher self-study. What could an evaluation look like that takes up and echoes the teacher-participants’ investments in interconnected culturally-relevant care? Maybe it would be built around peer-evaluation, the reflective “pedagogy matters” model (Mellow, Woolis, Klages-Bombich, & Restler 2015), self-evaluations, critical professional development (Kohli 2015), or portfolios. No matter the particular form (or forms), addressing carework in teacher evaluation means challenging facile answers in favor of nuanced questions, and centering teachers’ voices, experiences, and ways of seeing their own work.



*educational research and countervisualities of care*

*How do we make teachers' carework visible in educational research?*

I have argued that in this time of neoliberal accountability culture, school caring practices are being sidelined, while images of school success and failure are mainly messaged through the display of quantitative assessments—charts, tables, graphs, and statistics. Multimodal and arts-based research can provide tools for reframing discourses on school spaces, activities, and interactions, including care.

As I have endeavored to demonstrate through my own use of multimodal research methods, images and artworks can draw out the sensory, embodied, intimate experiences of teaching and carework. Visual and arts-based research offer particular affordances, especially when trying to access experiences and evoke emotions that may be more easily “seeable” than “sayable” (Luttrell 2013). As Philosopher Suzanne Langer wrote, the arts “objectify the life of a feeling” (1953, p.374). This affective potency comes from the experiential capacity of art, the ability to bring audiences in, arouse emotions, and galvanize alternative ways of seeing.

In the context of high stakes school accountability and an ever-narrowing quantitative angle of vision on teacher work, multimodal and arts-based educational scholarship holds open a vital space for investigation, revision and refusal. Arts-based research has the capacity not only to challenge dominant dehumanizing discourses about school settings and populations, but to refigure the way we see, visualize and imagine teacher work and care.

. . . . .

In cell phone photos, beeswax tracings, body maps, stories, text and transcription, *Re-visualizing care: Teachers' invisible labor in neoliberal times*, defies dominant visualities about urban schools,

students, and teachers. Our images and analyses—the teachers’ and my own—boldly assert their *rights to see and be seen* (Mirzoeff 2010) outside of racial capitalist patriarchy, beyond the bounds of unacknowledged whiteness and neoliberal school accountability. As a multimodal countervisuality, this study works to re-visualize teacher labor, to reject old answers with new questions, and “to think and see and dream” new ways forward (Mitchell 2002).

## APPENDIX A

### ItAG OVERVIEW

*beyond scores, ranks, + rubrics: re-imagining teacher evaluation*

#### JANUARY 24

- Introductions
- Overview of ItAG and participatory “syllabus” design. Participants read through the ItAG overview and contribute ideas/ edits/ questions

#### JANUARY 29

- Teacher evaluation timeline—through this activity we will review and contribute to an interactive timeline of important personal and political events in teacher evaluation.
- Creating community in our ItAG; a short dialogue
- Victoria presents (briefly) on her research, passes out consent forms
- Introduction to interactive media platform VoiceThread.com
- *At home: Review the timeline on VoiceThread and contribute a comment.*

#### FEBRUARY 5

- Readings and images on the Advance Teacher Evaluation System
- Asking and answering—participants pose questions about the new evaluation system to others in the group, we discuss together.
- *At home: What do you do in a day that never gets seen/ recognized? Create 3 images of this invisible work and post online to VoiceThread.*

#### FEBRUARY 12

- Share and discuss invisible work posts.
- Review questions and answers activity from prior session.
- Teacher practice maps—we will visually map the various dimensions, tasks, and activities that go into our work as teachers—linking labor to different parts of the body. Share out and discuss.
- *At home: review and reflect on teacher maps on VoiceThread. Add a comment or two.*

## FEBRUARY 26

- Review our work in the ItAG by looking back through images on VoiceThread.
- Discuss themes and patterns in the work and begin to sketch group goals for our collective “action.”
- *At home: Post or bring one artwork/ project that can serve as inspiration for our collective action.*

## MARCH 5

- Plan for our group ACTION!
- Review group art project ideas, do freewriting on action ideas, discuss options as a group and vote on top choice.
- *At home: explore and develop one of the ideas we discussed at the meeting.*

## MARCH 12

- Plan for “Those Who Can,” an in-person and online group art and activist project. Work in small groups to plan, troubleshoot, and prepare materials for the project’s three components (drawing, video, and pamphlet).
- Share out to the group and offer feedback and critique.

## MARCH 15

- New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE) conference. Participants set up a work station and video room in the hallway of the NYCoRE conference where we encourage conference attendees to respond to the question, “What do you do as an educator that can’t be measured?” with texts, drawings, collage, or a short video.

## APRIL 2

- Group dinner—catch up, debrief, and view contributions to Those Who Can Tumblr site. Discuss images and videos and make plans for next steps.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Begin by selecting out the images you made and then choose 3 or 4 that relate in some way to your own (could be aesthetically, materially, ideas, tone, etc.). We'll talk through each one of them and then discuss how they connect with each other.*

#### **FOR EACH IMAGE CREATED BY THE PARTICIPANT:**

1. Can you describe this image to me?
2. Where does the image come from? (if borrowed/ remixed digital image)
3. What do you think this image says about teaching and learning?
4. What kinds of emotions does this image bring up for you?
5. How does/ doesn't this image reflect your experience as a teacher?
6. What would you like viewers to take away from it?
7. Is there anything you would like to add, subtract or change about the image?
8. Are there other images or ideas that your image is talking to or talking back to? How are they related?

#### **FOR IMAGES CREATED BY OTHERS**

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What stands out to you about this image? Why did you choose it?
3. What does this image tell us about teaching and learning?
4. What (if any) questions do you have about this image?
5. Is there anything else you would like to say about this image?

### **AFTER DISCUSSING EACH IMAGE SEPARATELY...**

1. Looking at your images and those you selected, do you see them in relationship? If so, what kind of conversation are they having with each other?

*Bring up the videos on a computer screen and begin by viewing and discussing any that they made. Then ask, is there one video that stuck out to you from our viewing together? View it and discuss:*

1. What do you see/hear in this video?
2. What stands out to you about this video? Why did you choose it?
3. What does this video tell us about teaching and learning?
4. What (if any) questions do you have about this video?
5. Is there anything else you would like to say about this video?

### **WRAPPING UP**

1. In your dream world, where would you like to see this project go? How would it develop?
2. Are there any images that you feel might have particular public resonance? Or others that perhaps we should not post publically?
3. Who do you imagine as the audience for these images?
4. What questions do you have for me (about the interview, ItAG, my dissertation, or anything else)?

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