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**The Intersections of Selves and Policies: A Poetic Inquiry
into the Hydra of Teacher Education**

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Abstract: This article explores the intersection of selves and policies for teacher educators in an era of teacher education reform. Borne out of a promise to one another to write

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about our experiences navigating increasingly complex market-driven, neoliberal attacks on our work and world, we collected data across several years that documented our attempt to break our silence (Lorde, 1977) and explore how we, as teacher educators, *make sense of neoliberal reforms and policies in teacher preparation*. We draw specifically on Dunn's theory of the Hydra of Teacher Education (2016), alongside literature on reforms and policies in teacher preparation and teacher educators' forms of resistance to frame our work, and utilize arts-based poetic inquiry methodology (Prendergast, 2009; Rath, 2001) to explore the real, everyday implications of educational policy in our lives and in our careers. The poems we created as a "performative act" (Prendergast, 2009, p. xxiii) revealed that our experiences seemed to follow a cycle from hopelessness, to silence, to acquiescence, to collective resistance. We look carefully at this last portion of the cycle in our work, wondering *how, if at all, teacher educators can resist the neoliberalization of teacher preparation*. We conclude with implications for research, policy, and the practice of teacher education as we write to understand, write to resist, and write to survive.

Keywords: neoliberal reforms; teacher educator identity; teacher preparation; poetic inquiry

Las intersecciones del yo y las políticas: Una investigación poética sobre la complejidad de la formación docente

Resumen: Este artículo explora la intersección del yo y las políticas para la educación del profesorado en una era de reforma de la formación docente. Nacidos de una promesa mutua de escribir sobre nuestras experiencias navegando cada vez más complejos ataques neoliberales impulsados por el mercado en nuestro trabajo y en el mundo, recopilamos datos durante varios años que documentaban nuestro intento de romper nuestro silencio (Lorde, 1977) y exploramos cómo nosotros damos sentido a las reformas y políticas neoliberales en la preparación de los docentes, como formadores de docentes. Nos referimos específicamente a la teoría de Dunn en *Hydra of Teacher Education* (2016), junto con la literatura sobre reformas y políticas de preparación docente y las formas de resistencia de los formadores de docentes para enmarcar nuestro trabajo, y utilizar una metodología de investigación poética basada en las artes (Prendergast, 2009; Rath, 2001) para explorar las implicaciones reales y cotidianas de la política educativa en nuestras vidas y en nuestras carreras. Los poemas que creamos como un "acto performativo" (Prendergast, 2009, p. Xxiii) revelaron que nuestras experiencias parecían seguir un ciclo desde la desesperanza, al silencio, a la aquiescencia, a la resistencia colectiva. Miramos detenidamente esta última parte del ciclo en nuestro trabajo, preguntándonos cómo, si es que lo hacen, los formadores de docentes pueden resistir la neoliberalización de la preparación del maestro. Concluimos con implicaciones para la investigación, las políticas y la práctica de la formación docente mientras escribimos para comprender, escribimos para resistir y escribimos para sobrevivir.

Palabras clave: reformas neoliberales; identidad del educador docente; preparación del maestro; investigación poética

As interseções do self e as políticas: Uma pesquisa poética sobre a complexidade da formação de professores

Resumo: Este artigo explora a interseção do eu e das políticas para a formação de professores em uma era de reforma da formação docente. Nascido de uma promessa mútua de escrever sobre nossas experiências explorando ataques neoliberais cada vez mais complexos, impulsionados pelo mercado em nosso trabalho e no mundo, recolhemos dados por vários anos documentando nossa tentativa de romper nosso silêncio (Lorde,

1977) e nós exploramos nós damos sentido às reformas e políticas neoliberais na preparação de professores como educadores de professores. Referimo-nos especificamente à teoria de Dunn na *Hydra of Teacher Education* (2016), juntamente com a literatura sobre reformas e políticas de preparação de professores e as formas de resistência dos educadores de professores para enquadrar nosso trabalho e usar uma metodologia de pesquisa poética com base nas artes (Prendergast, 2009; Rath, 2001) para explorar as implicações reais e diárias da política educacional em nossas vidas e carreiras. Os poemas que criamos como um “ato performativo” (Prendergast, 2009, p. xxiii) revelaram que nossas experiências pareciam acompanhar o ciclo do desespero, do silêncio, da aquiescência, da resistência coletiva. Observamos atentamente esta última parte do ciclo em nosso trabalho, perguntando-nos como, se o fizerem, educadores de professores podem resistir à neoliberalização da preparação de professores. Concluímos com implicações para a pesquisa, políticas e práticas de formação de professores à medida que escrevemos para compreender, escrever para resistir e escrever para sobreviver.

Palavras-chave: reformas neoliberais; identidade do professor educador; preparação de professores; pesquisa poética

Introduction

I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood.

Audre Lorde, 1977

In 2010, harkening Dickens, Darling-Hammond described the heightened attention to teacher preparation: “It may be the *best of times* because so much hard work has been done by many teacher educators over the past two decades to develop more successful program models... It may equally be the *worst of times* because there are so many forces in the environment that conspire to undermine these efforts” (p. 35, emphasis added). Eight years later, teacher educators—conceptualized here as faculty members at institutes of higher education—are facing increasingly polarizing and problematic neoliberal reforms that impact their sense of well-being and morale, their professional practice, and their working and students’ learning conditions (Banks [Roberts], 2017; Dunn, 2016). Yet many of these policies, like those that have been part of K-12 schools since the advent of No Child Left Behind (2001), are rarely informed by scholarship and often include the voices of policymakers but not teacher educators themselves. In fact, the term “teacher educator” has largely been co-opted. Our roles as university teacher educators stand in stark contrast to politicians, big business interests, and decontextualized curriculum scriptors who feign the role of teacher educator by lobbying for the creation of policies and philosophies that influence the teaching practice of preservice teachers.

Indeed, as we were writing this manuscript, new Federal regulations for teacher preparation were announced. As described by the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education in a statement signed by a coalition of professional unions and educational organizations (2016):

On October 12, the U.S. Department of Education released final regulations for teacher preparation programs. While the regulations have been changed in minor ways from the proposed rule, they retain the basic structure of evaluating teacher preparation programs based on a federally mandated framework that requires student learning outcomes measurement and linking such performance to Title IV federal student aid eligibility.

Such regulations are merely the latest evidence of myriad reforms and policies that are handed down to teacher preparation programs (TPPs) and enacted by teacher educators—willingly or not—every day.

This research is borne out of our work as teacher educators in the age of accountability. Just as we are now teaching preservice educators who know no other public education system than one embedded with standards and high-stakes testing (Dunn & Certo, 2015), we have only been teacher educators in a climate where we are asked to document and report our adherence to state guidelines, fill out benchmarks and rubrics in online databases, and tailor our curriculum to meet the needs of external accrediting bodies. This work was first conceptualized when, at meetings of the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA), we noticed the increasing number of sessions about alternative teacher certification programs, program reporting, high-stakes testing and assessment for both K-12 and higher education, and other looming mandates for TPPs. At the same time, there were also sessions that offered alternative ways of thinking, knowing, and being in the world as teacher educators, yet they were few and far between. Thus, we left one AERA conference with a commitment to ourselves and each other: we would write about our experiences navigating increasingly complex and suffocating market-driven, neoliberal attacks on our work and world. Breaking our silence, we would write to understand, write to resist, and write to survive.

Considering Lorde's (1977) call for transforming silence into language and action, we ask ourselves and other teacher educators: "What are the words you do not have yet? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own?" (p. 42). This manuscript focuses on a particular set of tyrannies that face TPPs today: neoliberal reforms. In this article, we examine the intersections of teacher educators' selves with neoliberal policies. Specifically, we investigate: (1) How do we, as teacher educators, make sense of neoliberal reforms and policies in teacher preparation? (2) How, if at all, can we as teacher educators resist the neoliberalization of teacher preparation? In our analysis, we attempt to both consider and resist the notion that "the risks are too great" (Cole & Knowles, 1996) for teacher educators to engage in local, programmatic, and systemic reform within and beyond their own institutions.

Review of the Literature

This work explores the intersection of selves and policies for teacher educators in the era of teacher education reform. To help contextualize our poetic inquiry, we review three bodies of literature. First, we examine neoliberalism from the statehouse to the schoolhouse to the university, and focus in detail on neoliberal reforms and policies in teacher preparation. Second, we highlight scholarship on teacher educators' identities, paying particular attention to literature on the meanings of agency and resistance for this group. Finally, given our chosen methodology, we review studies in educational policy that have utilized arts-based methods to further situate our study in the important push for alternative and more humanizing approaches to research. Throughout our review of literature, we note the importance of our work in contributing to all of these fields.

Neoliberalism: From the Statehouse to the Schoolhouse to the University

Neoliberalism emphasizes the role of private interests and free markets over public interests and social policies (Harvey, 2005). That is, "the individual entrepreneur seeking to improve his or her own economic situation replaces deliberation over our values and societal goals" (Hirsch, 2011, p. 39). Neoliberalism suggests that "economic inequality does not result from unequal social

structures that privilege the already advantaged but, instead, from differences in individual choices and efforts. Inequality, therefore, is deserved and should not be a concern of government” (Hursh, 2011, p. 35). Yet neoliberalism is more than a set of economic principles and market-based reforms. It has become part of the social imaginary, a “symbolic force” and “an immense political project” (Bourdieu, 1998). Bourdieu (1998) argues that neoliberalism “is desocialised and dehistoricised at its roots [and] has, today more than ever, the means of *making itself true* and empirically verifiable.” On the whole, neoliberal ideology is “a programme of the methodical destruction of collectives” (Bourdieu, 1998, emphasis in original) that “values profit over people” (Chomsky, 1999). Similarly, Wacquant (2010) explains that viewing neoliberal ideology as solely about economics is “thin and incomplete, as well as too closely bound up with the sermonizing discourse of the advocates of neoliberalism” (p. 213). In his analysis of this “transnational political project,” Wacquant distills “a thicker notion that identifies the institutional machinery and symbolic frames through which neoliberal tenets are being actualized,” including “economic deregulation”; “welfare state devolution, retraction, and recomposition” to support the “intensification of commodification and to discipline labour”; “an expansive, intrusive, and proactive penal apparatus”; and the “cultural trope of individual responsibility” (p. 213). As Brown (2015) cogently describes, neoliberalism has become the all-encompassing ideology through which the world is viewed and shaped, a “normative order of reason [that has become] a widely and deeply disseminated governing rationality” (p. 9). To live in a neoliberal world means that it “transmogrifies every human domain and endeavor, along with humans themselves, according to a specific image of the economic” (Brown, p. 10). Ong (2007) argues for conceiving of neoliberalism with a “small n,” that we “view neoliberalism not as a system but a migratory set of practices” (p. 4). In this way, “neoliberal logic is best conceptualized not as a standardized universal apparatus, but a migratory technology of governing that interacts with situated sets of elements and circumstances” (p. 5). For the purposes of this manuscript, the “situated sets of elements and circumstances” are those that brought—and continue to bring—neoliberal logic to school.

Neoliberalism and K-12 schooling. A specific neoliberal image has shaped, and continues to shape, K-12 schools and universities around the world. Following the release of *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) and the subsequent passage of the No Child Left Behind Legislation, policy actors began articulating an agenda for professionalization that emphasized “market reform ideologies such as competition, high stakes testing, standardization, vouchers, and school choice” (Mungal, 2016, p. 6). We see “the transformation of educational values into business values” (Tuchman, 2009, p. 7), meaning that “the conversations about schooling and the expectations of teachers have fundamentally changed” (Bullough, 2016, p. 63). That is, “education discourse is now dominated by human capital theory and neoliberalism... and has become a major tool in what might be thought of as perpetual global economic warfare” (p. 63). This manifests in school settings in increasingly problematic ways; as Bullough (2016) argues, neoliberalism in schools relies upon “building competition among providers and the privatization of public services...; deregulation and devolution of control and oversight of schooling; emphasis on standardized tests...; and weakening of teacher unions” (Bullough, 2016, p. 64). It might also look like, as Kavanagh & Dunn (2013) explain, for-profit charter management groups, online classes, voucher systems, and continued recruitment of under-prepared and under-qualified teachers through programs like Teach For America.

The neoliberal university. In higher education, neoliberalism is reflected in the “changing priorities of universities ... that raise disturbing questions about what parents and students are getting in return for the increasingly steep tuitions they pay” (Washburn, 2005, p. xiii). Indeed, the

market's influence on higher education is not a new phenomenon, and research has demonstrated a long history of such involvement in universities around the country (i.e. Bok, 2003; Newfield, 2008; Washburn, 2005). However, the "size and scope" of market ideology has expanded since the rise of neoliberal public policies (Bok, 2003, p. 2). In the academy, neoliberalism governs interactions between colleagues and administration, among colleagues, and between students and faculty. Our universities have succumbed to pressures of capitalism, corporatization, privatization, and commercialization (Saunders, 2010). As a result, the ethos and language of the neoliberal market infiltrates all aspects of university life, from testing college graduates on what they've learned in college courses, to naming endowed Chairs for private philanthropists who then seek to influence the type of discourse happening in certain departments. It looks like considering 'impact' at the scholarly level to be only those things that can be measured with impact factors, to valuing measures that quantify rather than measures that matter (Levin, 2006). Amidst this transformation, the neoliberal university is built on silence and surveillance, assuming that faculty will passively acquiesce to neoliberal reforms, subsist in silence, or become indoctrinated to neoliberal reforms and govern themselves and others in this way (Cross, 2017). Framing students (and their parents) as consumers, faculty labor is commodified (Saunders, 2010).

Neoliberalization of teacher education. University-based teacher education has also been infiltrated with neoliberal policies and practices, in part related to continued critiques of teacher preparation programs; as Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power (2013) suggest, "amid many contentious debates about teacher education policy in the United States, a single consensus resounds among its critics: "Teacher education is broken and needs to be fixed"' (p. 7). For example, a common refrain is that teacher education programs have low standards and do not prepare students well enough in areas like classroom management. Ongoing critiques, and continued support for charter schools as a tool for reform in the reauthorized ESEA bill (Every Student Succeed Act; ESSA), have led to an increase in acceptance of and funding for alternative teacher recruitment and preparation programs, such as Teach For America, the Relay Graduate School of Education, and others (Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015). Many of these institutions partner with for-profit charter schools for "teacher training" or run their own charter organizations. According to Mungal (2016), "a common narrative of market-based reform is that public goods such as education institutions are viewed as bureaucratic monopolies and that deregulation opens the market to more agile, efficient, and less costly organizations" (p. 7). A push to break "the university monopoly on teacher education" has led to alternative teacher certification programs absent of much of the foundational, theoretical, and pedagogical coursework that is commonly found in university teacher education programs (Mungal, 2016, p. 8). Though such models emerged during a period where market reform was taking hold to address teacher shortages, they appear to be here to stay; as Mungal suggests, Relay and TFA (and other similar models) "represented a mechanism that reformers were able to use to open up the field of education to marketization" (p. 14).

In addition to widespread alternative models, other initiatives have centered on increased accountability for K-12 teachers and teacher educators, with student outcomes as a primary indicator for teacher effectiveness (American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education, 2016; Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013; Lewis & Young, 2013). Zeichner (2010) writes often about increased accountability and hyperrationality in teacher education programs in the US: "By hyper-rationality, I mean extreme pressure on teacher education institutions to rationalize their programs and student assessment systems to a point where the demands for accountability and compliance begin to interfere with and undermine the accomplishment of the goal of educating teachers" (p. 1547). He cites the emergence of electronic portfolio tracking systems (e.g., LiveText and Chalk & Wire) as one example of increased rationalization and suggests that these companies "aggressively

market portfolio systems to colleges and universities so that they can provide the necessary data to gain approval for their programs” (p. 1548). According to Zeichner, “these portfolio systems have emphasized the bureaucratic aspects of keeping track of student teachers’ performance on standards and for the most part have failed to take advantage of the potential in portfolios to deepen teacher learning” (p. 1548). In short, the amount of detail teacher educators are required to produce for local accreditation interferes with their more authentic work of educating teachers. As Zeichner (2010) suggests, there is a clash between “authenticity (doing what one knows is in the best interest of the learning of one’s students) and performativity (doing what one needs to do to meet accountability demands even when one knows it is not in the best interest of one’s students)” (p. 1548).

Similar concerns about missed opportunities for learning connected to neoliberal agendas arise as teacher educators in many states are forced to comply with state mandates related to externally evaluated teacher performance assessments. One such assessment is the Educator Teacher Performance Assessment, or edTPA. These portfolios, originally developed by Stanford to serve as a learning tool for new teachers, have recently been rolled out in many states as a way to assess preservice teachers’ instructional planning, lesson implementation, and student assessment. The edTPA carries extremely high stakes for teacher candidates. The portfolios are externally graded by Pearson, an international for-profit educational corporation, and are tied to teacher certification in most states. As described by Tuck and Gorlewski (2016), “wrapped in the rhetoric of professionalism and quality, edTPA represents the normalization of teaching as a technical and apolitical act, of examinations as meaningful measures of complex acts and useful instruments for surveillance and discipline, and of relationships and local contexts as subordinate to distant, objective expertise” (p. 203). Sato (2014), in her research designed to examine the underlying conceptions of the edTPA, outlines several arguments against a common assessment for teacher candidates’ performance. Particularly relevant to individual schools/colleges of education is the idea that including a common assessment will likely produce standardization of the teacher preparation process and therefore not account for distinct approaches to preparing teachers valued by individual teacher preparation programs. As she describes, “if a program has a mission to prepare teachers for urban contexts, then an assessment that is designed to apply across multiple types of contexts may miss some of the deeply nuanced aspects of that program’s candidate performance” (Sato, 2014, p. 423).

Amidst these contextual factors and forces, explicit naming of neoliberal agendas and accountability practices remains critical. As Richmond, Bartell, and Dunn (2016) ask, “how do we, as a field, move beyond ‘tinkering’ around the edges of our programs and move toward systemically addressing the influence of neoliberalism and accountability in teacher preparation?” (p. 103). Our work in this manuscript distills specific ways that neoliberal policies and reforms have influenced teacher educators, in particular in relation to notions of self and identity. We believe that our explicit naming of these neoliberal policies and their impact is a first step on the road to addressing the influence of neoliberalism in teacher preparation programs.

Teacher Educators’ Roles in a Neoliberal Context

As the national accountability movement plays out, teacher educators are working to make sense of their local contexts within this reform agenda, a context that according to Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), is “enormously complex” (p. 465). Richmond, Bartell, and Dunn (2016) suggest that part of this complexity lies in teacher educators’ “search for equilibrium between the world that currently exists and the world that we wish existed, between the world of neoliberal accountability pressures and the world that recognizes the importance of coursework on justice, equity, diversity, and sociocultural contexts of teaching and learning” (p. 103). In fact, Curtis,

Bordelon and Teitelbaum (2010) argue that teacher educators must make sense of the “wide array of remedies” suggested by “eager reformers” and suggest the challenges that teacher educators face as they undertake reforms while monitoring “the quality and credibility of input that might impact our schools and the children who attend them” (p. 134). This complexity is magnified, especially when, as Sleeter (2008) suggests, “generally teacher educators have only a vague idea (or no idea) of what neoliberalism is, not recognizing it as a project for restoring class power by dismantling public services” (p. 1955). We argue that teacher educators *want* to better understand and engage in this work: debate the overall purposes of schooling, examine the meaning of justice within their own local context, and consider best practices and pedagogies amidst neoliberal assaults on teacher education. Yet despite, and oftentimes in light of, these efforts teacher educators must do this work within a culture and climate not necessarily set up to support or reward those who participate in the debate. First, as Dunn (2016) points out in her study of doctoral students preparing to become teacher educators, there is little to no “explicit instruction in and dialogue around the politics of teacher preparation itself” (p. 23). There is also little support for teacher educators who engage in this work once hired as faculty. For example, Massachusetts teacher educator Madeloni received a letter of non-renewal terminating her contract after she supported her students in resisting the edTPA (Madeloni, 2014). Faculty have also been penalized when they engage in resistance work as part of their own scholarship; Knowles (in Cole & Knowles, 1996) writes about the process of being denied tenure and suggests that his use of self-study methodology, documenting the messy work of engaging in and resisting educational reform movements, likely had a major impact on his tenure decision.

As Cole and Knowles (1996) point out, there is a mismatch between what faculty members are hired to do and how they are judged and promoted:

The further one’s work is removed from the field (or the swamp) and located on the high ground, the more highly regarded and valued it is.... Those who are most interested in programmatic and systemic reform can’t afford to invest their time or energy in that work—the risks are too great. So, what does that say about the possibilities for sustained, informed reform measures in teacher education and beyond? (p. 117)

This dichotomy between what is valued and what many teacher educators seek to do is also highlighted in Bullough’s (2014) rhetorical analysis of language in the neoliberal-laden *Preparing Teachers* (2010) report. Through the use of cluster analysis, Bullough found that word clusters around “science” and “researcher” valued large randomized trials and generalizable results that would provide more effective pathways to quality teaching and teacher education. As the term ‘researcher’ was associated with these large-scale studies, it excluded those “whose work or professional commitments reflect a different subject position and professional identity—field supervisor, mentor, methods course instructor, and case or narrative inquirer” (p. 188). Small scale studies were criticized; they could not “provide answers to questions about how teachers might best be prepared (NRC, 2010, as cited in Bullough, 2016, p. 191). Bullough argues, however, that “among the virtues of well-conceived small-scale studies, ones that make persons “big” and populations “small,” is that they can and often do provide answers to how teacher education students are faring within specific contexts” (p. 191).

We agree, and further argue that these “small-scale” studies can have significant impact on how we reimagine teacher educators’ experiences in these settings. For example, Tuck and Gorlewski (2016) formed a teacher educator collective in New York to create localized edTPA scoring rubrics focused explicitly on issues of race and equity. The authors stressed that, although

they developed an alternative scoring tool, they never “sought to create a replacement for a standardized performance assessment; instead, we aimed to investigate how a research collective composed of teacher educators might evaluate materials submitted in responses to a policy tool such as edTPA” and positioned their project as an example of participatory policy analysis designed to “understand and intervene upon policy by those most impacted” (p. 207). They call others to participate in this work, and suggest that “more is to come, always” (p. 208). Sleeter (2008), in her discussion of broad strands of teacher education for equity and democracy, points out that certain subfields of research—for example, studies focused on cross-cultural and community-based field experiences—are based largely on “small-scale case studies [that] illustrate powerfully” their overall message of what it looks like when teacher educators engage in localized program redesign (p. 1950). Alongside these authors, we are engaging in scholarly self-study at the micro, vernacular, and local levels as we consider how neoliberal policies and practices impact our work. As we do this, we are answering Bullough’s (2014) call: “rather than quietly going about our business and complaining behind closed doors and feeling forced to respond to yet another mandate or critic, we need to push back and aggressively engage our critics. Moping will not do” (p. 193). Similar to the recent call for preservice teachers to be prepared not only to *know about* the political contexts of K-12 schooling, but also to *engage* in those politics (Marchant, 2012), we argue that *teacher educators*, too, must be informed about and engaged in the political agenda surrounding teacher education.

Arts-Based Responses to Neoliberal Contexts in Teacher Preparation Policy

As we reviewed literature on teacher educators’ efforts to engage in this political work, we found some scholars writing about increasingly neoliberal contexts in non-traditional ways. For example, Morrison (2016) was interested in how teacher educators might design courses that help preservice teachers understand the complexities of schooling amidst increasingly complicated and layered neoliberal discourses. She engaged in a recursive action research project on her own teaching and shared suggestions on how to “introduce students to the concepts of and issues surrounding educational privatization and market-based de/reforms in America’s public school context” (p. 13). Morrison argues that her “path on this yellow brick road of self-study” illustrated the vital importance of self-study to developing nuanced awareness of neoliberalism in schools and teacher education (p. 13). Stern and Brown (2016) engaged in a form of participatory action research as well, as they joined their research participants in several activist teacher groups. Initially motivated by their own and their participants’ trends of depression brought on by critical analysis of neoliberalism in school settings, they found that activist educators

express the possibility of oscillation from a hopeless place to another place, a place where people feel supported to dream and think otherwise, a place where heartbeats and minds pulse toward love, healing and the strength to create structural and systemic change. (p. 351)

Connected to our work within the realm of arts-based poetic inquiry, we found researchers also experimenting with the use of poetry in self-study, though not necessarily in studies explicitly tied to examining policy or neoliberal constructs. For example, through an autobiographical lens, Sullivan (2000) uses poetry and stanzaic prose to examine the various meanings of attention; as she explains, her work is “largely an autobiography of attention—learning it, teaching it, discovering its role in research” (p. 212). Sullivan argues that her use of poems “constitute a political statement on behalf of the enfranchisement of artists, whose voices have been marginalized in the academy” (p. 220). Grimmett (2016) similarly utilized self-study and poem writing in her quest to better understand her own teaching and how preservice teachers struggle with adapting to and advocating for co-

construction of understandings in classroom spaces. She suggests her use of poetic inquiry helped her to “think creatively with data, to create holistic interpretations and empathic connections between researcher, participants, and readers” but cautions that the poems presented in her article “do not seek to be regarded as great examples of poetry...These poems were written as part of the inquiry process, and are shared...so that readers can understand how poetry was used as a stimulus for understanding new ‘ways of being’” (Grimmitt, 2016, p. 43-44).

As we considered our own work in these spaces, we found that there was a dearth of published research that utilized arts-based, self-study methods to better understand teacher educators’ experiences in *neoliberal contexts*. According to Weber and Mitchell (2004), scholars are increasingly utilizing photography, creative writing, drawings, and performance in self-study research to “hold up another mirror to facilitate self-reflection, and force critical consideration of the social and cultural dimensions of personal experience” (p. 980). Further, Dewey argued (as cited in Sullivan, 2000) that “production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being ‘intellectual’” (1934/1980, p. 46). We were surprised, then, to find limited research that combined these two areas. One good example, however, is Dowling, Fitzgerald, and Flintoff’s (2015) narrative approach to examining dilemmas that teacher educators face when trying to implement critical pedagogies and social justice curriculums in the current neoliberal climate in higher education. The authors share a “narrative constructed from memories” that draws on collective “fragments of truths” about the challenges teacher educators face when they engage in innovative work in teacher education. As they worked to construct these collective fictions, the authors found that their “biographical tales have revealed discourses saturated in a sense of swimming against the tide” (p. 1037), oftentimes alone, as they “recognize the effects of neoliberalism on [their] own professional identities and lives” (p. 1041). Their use of narrative arts-based methods, and collective memory work in particular, reminded them that “being an educator is always about becoming in the world...[and that] knowing where we come from, and recognising the tortuous paths we travel, would appear to be a valuable part of this embodied and cognitive work” (p. 1043). Our study, utilizing self-study and poetic inquiry to better understand how neoliberalism operates on and through the acts of teacher educators, adds to this growing body of research. This work fills an important gap in the literature as we “think creatively with data” (Grimmett, 2016, p. 43) to “constitute a political statement” (Sullivan, 2000, p. 220) as we continue to wonder together about the ways neoliberalism operates in our teacher educator worlds. We explore further rationale for specific use of poetic inquiry in the methodology section below.

Theoretical Framework

Dunn’s theory of the Hydra of Teacher Education (2016), based on an empirical study of new teacher educators, provides an initial framework for our study. Dunn’s theory is adapted from the work of Picower & Mayorga (2015), in which the authors compared reforms in K-12 schools to the myth of the multi-headed Hydra monster whose heads emanate from a strong body. They argue:

Those who are familiar with Greek mythology know that the Hydra was an immortal multi-headed creature. Any attempt to slay the Hydra was a struggle in futility and hopelessness, because if one head were removed, the Hydra would grow back two more in its place... The Hydra was only finally able to be slain by Heracles because he worked together with an ally, his nephew, to remove all the heads at once, making it impossible for the decapitated heads to grow back. (p. 4)

Just as Picower & Mayorga argue that “each of these Hydra heads was analogous to one of the market-based reforms unfolding in our city,” Dunn also asserts that the metaphorical Hydra can represent policies in teacher preparation that challenge teacher educators’ abilities to enact social justice. In her study, Dunn found that all of the contextual factors that novice teacher educators found most challenging were reforms and policies undergirded by the same neoliberal base. That is, while each “head” might seem disconnected from the others, they are, in fact, held up by the same “body” of neoliberal ideology: capitalism, commodification, and competition. In particular, participants pointed to the following reforms and policies as Hydra heads: (1) edTPA, or the Educator Teacher Performance assessment, an assessment designed for preservice teachers to outline their planning, instruction, and assessment for one unit of instruction in their field placements and that is currently administered by Pearson, Inc.; (2) Teach For America, a recruitment agency that brings recent college graduates into urban schools for two year teaching stints; (3) Race To the Top, which required states to compete for federal funding by committing to value-added measures that attempt to quantify the individual growth that a teacher contributes to students over time and which are now being rolled out to tie student test scores to the preparation programs from which their teachers came; (5) National Council on Teacher Quality, an organization that collects data about teacher preparation programs and puts out public reports on the status of teacher preparation field; (6) the Department of Education, the state-level authority for curriculum, certification, and budgeting; (7) the state’s Professional Standards Commission, which serves as the regulating body for teacher certification and which requires many reports at the institutional and program level; (8) InTASC, the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, which distributes and measures standards by which teacher education programs are frequently evaluated; and (9) NCATE/CAEP, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education/ the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, the national accrediting body for teacher preparation programs. Dunn found that this Hydra of Teacher Education lurks menacingly over the possibilities for teacher educators to enact social justice and equity. As one participant recalled, “it’s dangerous to be a scholar-activist these days” amidst such an environment. How, then, do teacher educators respond to the Hydra?

According to Picower & Mayorga (2015), when teachers and activists attempted to respond to reforms at the K-12 level in New York City, “the initial response by those concerned with educational justice was to furiously address each individual head by focusing time and energy on one after another... The group realized that focusing on one head meant that our attention was often drawn away from the larger forces, or Hydra body, driving reform—namely, the form of capitalism that some describe as neoliberalism” (p. 4).

Extending Dunn’s initial inquiry where novice teacher educators were the focus, we turn to our own practice as mid-career teacher educators who “came of age” in the academy as neoliberal reforms were becoming increasingly present in higher education. To do so, we pay particular attention to four of the neoliberal reforms suggested by Dunn (2016) in an analysis of our experiences in three different teacher preparation programs. For the purposes of this manuscript, we have chosen to focus on a subset of the Hydra elements so that we can more fully explore each of them. The four that we chose are those that appeared most often within and across our data sources. While the other elements were surely present in the profession and in our own practices, in the period for which we are analyzing data, the four highlighted elements played the biggest role in shaping our contexts.

Specifically, we investigate: (1) How do we as teacher educators make sense of neoliberal reforms and policies in teacher preparation? (2) How, if at all, can we as teacher educators resist the neoliberalization of teacher preparation?

Arts-Based Methodology

To do this work, we draw on arts-based research methods, and poetic inquiry in particular. Below we offer definitions of and rationale for the use of arts-based poetic inquiry, followed by a description of our context. We then offer a detailed description of our data and methods as it relates specifically to poetic inquiry.

Definition of and Rationalization for Arts-Based and Poetic Inquiry

According to Barone and Eisner (1997), arts-based research is defined by “the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research ‘text’” (p. 95). It is judged, in part, by its *illuminating effect*—its ability to reveal what had not been noticed” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 102). Arts-based inquirers are oftentimes positioned as “researcher-storytellers” who do not “seek certainty about correct perspectives on educational phenomena” but instead use art to “raise significant questions about prevailing policy and practice that enrich ongoing conversation” (Barone, 2007, p. 466). More specifically, in our work we make use of poetic inquiry (Prendergast, 2009; Rath, 2001), an arts-based methodology that, while growing in popularity in qualitative studies, has not been used in educational policy research. As suggested by Prendergast (2009), “the potential power of poetic inquiry is to do as poetry does, that is to synthesize experience in a direct and affective way” (p. xxii).

We argue that this move to arts-based, poetic inquiry in educational policy research, and for studies focused on neoliberalism in particular, is important for at least three reasons. First, we argue that art helps us see and respond to seemingly regular happenings in new ways. As Eisner (1995) contends, “artistically crafted novels, poems, films and paintings, and photography have the capacity to awaken us from our stock responses” (p. 2), and we argue this is particularly important when considering how neoliberalism operates in school and university spaces. As Lipman (2011) reminds us,

neoliberalism is not just “out there” as a set of policies and explicit ideologies. It has developed a new social imaginary, a common sense about how we think about society and our place in it.... In this sense, the power of neoliberalism lies in its saturation of social practices and consciousness, making it difficult to think otherwise. (p. 6)

Utilizing arts-based inquiry, and poetic inquiry in particular, “makes the ordinary seem extraordinary. It provokes, innovates, and breaks through common resistance, forcing us to consider new ways of seeing or doing things” (Weber & Mitchell, 2004, p. 985). In this way, the creation of our poetry is a “performative act” where we use the poetry to explore the real, everyday implications of educational policy in our lives and careers (Prendergast, p. xxiii, 2009). We, like Faulkner (2009), “often don’t know what [we are] trying to say until the poem is written... We discover much of what we mean to say as we write” (p. 3).

Second, an arts-based approach allows us to represent the complex, oftentimes silenced, emotions related to making sense of the ways in which neoliberal reforms have affected our practice as teacher educators. As described by Butler-Kisber (2002): “these nontraditional forms help disrupt the hegemony inherent in traditional texts and evoke emotional responses that bring the reader/viewer closer to the work, permitting otherwise silenced voices to be heard” (p. 230). Barone (2007) suggests similar motivations for the use of arts-based research; there is “long overdue recognition of the sound of silence, a sudden painful awareness of the extent to which human voices have been systematically excluded from traditional research texts” (p. 463). We agree with Görlich (2016) that poetic inquiry, in particular, broadens understanding and provokes an affective response.

For example, as we consider how we experience and resist neoliberal reforms in teacher preparation, we remember that traditional methods of research oftentimes focus on the interventions or reforms themselves. While we find value in work that looks at how neoliberalism operates in teacher preparation spaces, we also strive to find methodologies that shift the focus toward teacher educators' voices and emotional experiences within these neoliberal spaces. As Görlich (2016) suggests, the use of poetic inquiry "forces us, academics, professionals and decision-makers to acknowledge the profound impact political interventions have on [our] lives" (p. 533).

Finally, like Rancière (2015), we believe that "art compels us to revolt when it shows us revolting things" (p. 135), especially in the realm of policy and politics in schooling. According to Rancière (2015), "if there exists a connection between art and politics, it should be cast in terms of dissensus, the very kernel of the aesthetic regime: artworks can produce effects of dissensus precisely because they neither give lessons nor have any destination" (p. 140). Instead, critical art aims to produce "a new perception of the world, and therefore to create a commitment to its transformation" (Rancière, 2015, p. 142). This form of resistance—aiming to question continually our world through emotionally charged arts-based scholarship—is different from resistance that might occur on the ground. For example, many teacher educators join professional organizations and subcommittees within those organizations charged with making sense of or engaging in policy debates. While this work is worthwhile, it generally has an end-goal, a question to be answered, or a task to complete. This stands in contrast to the use of poetry, in particular, in scholarly inquiry—poetry that makes use of blank spaces on the page and invites those who choose to engage to bring more to the reading of the manuscript. As suggested by Faulkner (2009),

Poetry questions,
rages against.
Poetry is political,
risky,
unleashes secrets. (para. 34)

Used within educational policy research, art can be effective politically especially when it "leaves the spaces reserved for it and becomes a social practice" (Rancière, 2015, p. 134-135). It becomes a space to unleash secrets—for us as writers and for our audience as readers.

Context

In poetic inquiry, instead of traditional data reporting mechanisms, scholars craft data into poetry. Our poems are written as *vox autoethnographia*, or in the researchers' personal voices. Such a crafting of our experiences in poetic form represents an attempt to "do something with the data, rather than saying something about it" (Rath, 2001, p. 117). As implied in the term *vox autoethnographia*, we are our own participants. In this way, this type of poetic inquiry is similar to autoethnography or self-studies, whereby the researchers are themselves the subjects of the inquiry and the data sources are ones we produced. We each self-identify as university teacher educators for social justice and/or scholar-activists, though our specific areas of expertise, research, and teaching vary. We view teacher educators as those expert faculty who have years of research and teaching experience through the preparation of preservice teachers at the undergraduate and graduate levels. We believe teacher educators' direct, sustained course- and field-based experiences with preservice teachers and K-12 schools allows them to have specialized and nuanced understandings of teacher candidates' abilities, needs, strengths and capabilities that enables them to apply their scholarship to address the changing needs of the classrooms and schools preservice teachers will someday serve.

The three institutions discussed in this article are all public, state universities of various sizes. All prepare preservice teachers at the undergraduate and master's level. As public institutions, they are subject to additional guidelines from their state governments, in addition to those mandated by national accrediting bodies like CAEP. Taken together, these three universities represent much of the diversity of institutional contexts in which preservice teachers are prepared. Stephanie is an assistant professor of education at a medium-sized doctoral-degree granting university in the southeastern United States. Located in a major urban city, its College of Education serves a large proportion of students of color. A former middle school math teacher, Stephanie's areas of research include preservice teacher education, school-university partnerships, and the examination of whiteness in university and school spaces. At the time of writing, Stephanie had been a professor for seven years, three years as a clinical assistant professor followed by four years in a tenure-track position. Alyssa is an assistant professor of teacher education at a large, midwestern doctoral-degree granting university with national land grant status. Serving over 2,500 students, its College of Education is nationally ranked and is a predominantly white institution (PWI). Prior to this, she worked at the same institution as Stephanie. A former high school English teacher, Alyssa's areas of research include urban and multicultural education, educational policy, and the sociocultural contexts of urban schools and teacher preparation. At the time of writing, Alyssa had been a professor for six years. Erica is an associate professor of education and French at a small regional teaching institution in the southeastern US. Located on the outskirts of a metropolitan area, it is designated as a predominantly Black institution (PBI) and houses its Department of Education within a College of Arts and Sciences. A former French and ESL community college instructor, Erica's areas of research include preparation of multicultural and ESL teachers, study abroad, and second and foreign language pedagogy. At the time of writing, Erica was in her seventh year as a professor.

Data and Methods

For the purposes of this manuscript, our data include five years (2011-2016) of written data across three researchers. Data sources include personal reflections, electronic communications, programmatic documents, and social media postings. Each author collected her own data from across this period. First, we identified any sources that related to our research questions, literature review, and/or theoretical framework. We searched through emails, student assignments, and files that were related to key policies and reforms. We combed through personal notes and handwritten files from the time period, including meeting minutes or any other documents that seemed related to reforms in teacher education. Electronically, our search terms including things like "edTPA," "TFA," "BOE," and "NCATE." We also searched for by sender, choosing senders who we knew were involved in implementing reforms, such as program coordinators or department chairs. This meant, for example, that Alyssa identified 224 emails about topics such as the edTPA, Teach For America, NCATE, and related policies. She also collected 15 personal reflections or written memos, 35 social media postings, and several programmatic documents. Similarly, Stephanie identified 96 emails about topics such as the edTPA, Teach For America, NCATE, and related policies. She also collected eight personal reflections or written memos and several programmatic documents. Additionally, Erica primarily targeted emails related to edTPA, NCATE and collected 12 handwritten notes from faculty meetings, edTPA local scoring trainings, and other programmatic documents. This retroactive search meant that, perhaps, there were things we might have discarded or deleted that would have been helpful as additional data sources. However, because many of the documents were

electronic and searchable, we were able to find them easily. We also found documents about which we had previously forgotten that proved to be useful in our analysis.

Once we had gathered all of the data sources, we each selected relevant quotations, words, and phrases from our individual sources. In this way, no private communications were revealed to other authors if they were not the original intended recipients. We included quotations that were memorable and by a variety of senders in order to show both breadth and depth. Quotations were chosen to highlight different types of reforms, poetic/metaphorical writing, student comments that were so memorable that we were still thinking about them, or comments that compelled us to change our thinking or our practice. We listed these selected quotations in a shared virtual chart and attributed them to each author.

A note about trustworthiness and credibility of this research: Even though technically poetic inquiry could be considered as a type of qualitative research where the concern is to achieve data saturation or crystallization, we sought primarily to achieve the aims of arts-based research, a field that relies upon different criteria for judging its relevance and “rigor.” According to Barone & Eisner (1997), arts-based research is determined to be “good” if it works to

enhance meanings, to broaden and deepen ongoing conversations about educational policy and practice... First, the merits of the research are to be judged by its illuminating effect—its ability to reveal what had not been noticed.... Arts-based research, in this sense, culminates in work that is referentially adequate. By referentially adequate we mean that it enables the reader to notice what the researcher through his or her work claims to be there.... Second, the research should be judged also by its generativity—its ability to promote new questions. One of the most important functions of ABER is that it raises more questions than answers.... A third feature that can be used to appraise arts-based research is its incisiveness; that is, its ability to focus tightly on educationally salient issues and questions. Does the research address what is educationally significant in a school, a classroom, or in the lives of school people? Does the material get to the heart of the matter, persuading readers of the educational importance of the events portrayed? Another feature of arts-based research is its generalizability; that is, its relevance to phenomena outside of the research text. Does the research text have legs? Does it enable a reader to make connections that had not been made before?... Once again, the foregoing features require the use of judgment to determine their presence. They cannot be applied as formulaic criteria. (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 102)

Once all of the data were included in the chart, we read within and across data sources and participants. We identified patterns in thoughts, words and ideas, a process in poetic inquiry called “sifting” (Prendergast, 2009, p. xxiii). These patterns became our first themes, which were then refined into the themes reflected in the Findings section below. This process of sorting words, synthesizing meaning, and combining data sources with other ideas is known in poetic inquiry as creating *found poems*, an established practice in literature where writers borrow passages, words, or phrases from any variety of sources outside of themselves. The sampled words remain grouped as they were found and the researchers modify, juxtapose, adapt and adjust the rhythm, phrasing, and breaks of the sample. Researchers then add context through the use of various literary devices and poetic creativity (Butler-Kisber, 2002, McCullis, 2013; Prendergast, 2009). The found poems are a new representation of reality that allow readers to

experience a familiar event or idea in a new way. Unique to our manuscript, as it is co-authored, the resulting poems are composed of a mix of data from all sources and each of the three researchers. Interspersed with these data points are words, phrases, and notions that extend and connect the primary themes to blend the data into a poem. As in arts-based research, “the literary text will sometimes—usually for the purpose of educating readers about the value of the textual experiment—be accompanied by descriptions of (or stories about) the research process, or analysis of themes embodied within it” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 97).

Based on what our data analysis revealed, we explore the following findings below: (1) the initial hopelessness and confusion upon introduction to neoliberal policies, (2) the safety and danger of silence in the face of neoliberal reforms, (3) the tension between acquiescing to and resisting neoliberal policies in teacher education, and (4) the promise and possibility of collective organizing against such reforms. In this way, we explore the cycle of our sense making from initial despair and resignation to agency and empowerment. As we move forward in this work, however, we heed Barone’s (2007) warning that a “tension is...felt in attempts to blend the political and the aesthetic in narrative constructions” and continue to consider how we might “reconcile the opposing tendencies of political substance and aesthetic form in emancipatory-minded storytelling” (p. 458).

Findings & Discussion

From the study of our experiences across program contexts, we found that there is both a unique nature of some policy problems, as well as a remarkable and troubling similarity of reform efforts across (yet often without regard to) contexts. First, we asked *How do teacher educators make sense of neoliberal reforms and policies in teacher preparation?* Our findings revealed that our experiences seemed to cycle from hopelessness to resistance. The diagram below illustrates this cycle as we observed in our data and as it is explored in our poetic inquiry:



It is in this final theme that we answer the second research question of this study: *how, if at all, can teacher educators resist the neoliberalization of teacher preparation?* In the sections below, organized by theme, we first share our data in poetic form. Each poem is made up of a mix of data from all three researchers, as well as additional “connective” words and ideas that we incorporated to mesh the data into a poem. We have italicized the portions of each poem that use verbatim data. Then, we include a brief narrative after each poem in which we expand upon the poems’ data and discuss the connections of these data points to our theoretical framework and previous literature.

Hopelessness and Confusion

The poem below is a collection of public and personal writing at the time new neoliberal policies were introduced into our teacher preparation programs. As noted above, direct quotations from our data are italicized. The poem illustrates, first, preservice teachers’ confusion and concern about the policies, especially the edTPA and other requirements for which they are financially responsible. It also foregrounds our own hopelessness and unease about being asked to implement these policies, counter to our social justice orientations, in our roles as teacher educators and program coordinators.

Full Circle: Who's Speaking?

Supposedly *we are the "experts,"*
the ones to whom students look
with pleading eyes, questioning tones, hope in their voice...

We see they are
struggling,
discouraged,
so tired,
trying *really hard to do all of this at once.*

They, who we teach to push back against
injustice in schools and communities,
are told to be
complicit in injustice
in their own programs.

They look at us *defiantly,* daring us to
push back now,
now that we know the *stark reality:*
"If it's not about edTPA, I will not be listening."
"I think I'll just go do crack."
"It won't make me a better teacher.
It just makes them richer."

But how do we give hope when
we have none?
We, too, look at the world around us with
little understanding, despondency.
We lock eyes across meeting tables,
when we get *far too frustrated,* when
this *makes no sense,* when
the amount of work is truly oppressive, when
our *responsibilities are in*
direct conflict with our stated program goals
and values.

Values that are
Buried underneath
Piles of paperwork,
edTPA workshops,
Livetext manuals,
Board reports.
Hidden behind
assignments that cannot be modified
and evaluation training.
Neglected when
we have to ask if they feel *financially prepared*

to be student teachers.
 Pushed aside when
 we wonder if we *did more harm than good*.
 If she is ready to be a teacher.

Please tell me this is all a joke.
If the biggest universities in the system won't resist this,
how can our small program?
 What has this done to us?

And when a student writes:
I feel like I can't do this. I don't know why they're making us do this.
 When a student stands up in front of her peers,
 and says:
This test, this test,
this thing that I have to do, that I don't want to do,
the thing that's taking my time and my soul.
I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do....
 It could just as easily be us,
 Speaking our hopelessness
 into existence.

As we organized our data for this poem, we found that themes of our own helplessness and confusion oftentimes mirrored those of our students. This poem helps magnify the initial confusion we felt *alongside* our students, as we were introduced to new neoliberal reforms such as edTPA. We immediately recognized these “reforms” as contrary to our personal commitments to social justice and equity, and found many of our students reacting in similar ways. Striking to us as we reviewed our data was the seemingly parallel emotional reaction to this work—our students trying *really hard to do all of this [edTPA and program portfolio work] at once* while we emailed one another about *the amount of work [that] is truly oppressive*. We were overwhelmed, stressed, and feeling like we were barely surviving under *piles of paperwork, LiveText sessions, and edTPA workshops*. The hopelessness that we felt derived from the tensions inherent in teacher education at the moment, between value-driven work and task-driven work, between conformity or automation and individuality and humanity. Indeed, many of the reasons that we were drawn to teacher education in the first place were being challenged, making these tensions ripe for hopelessness.

We also came to understand how our lack of agency and autonomy in curriculum-making mirrored that of our preservice teachers. As we taught our preservice teachers not to “teach to the test,” we were forced to standardize and narrow our own curriculum in response to the high-stakes nature of edTPA. We struggled as we felt *complicit in injustice*, at times implementing measures that Madeloni (2014) warned against, at times “complicit in the production of compliant educators for a compliant workforce” (p. 84). As our students remind us, *It won't make me a better teacher. It just makes them richer*. We struggled with the fact that some of the skills required by the edTPA are, in fact, valuable and may, if truly learned and implemented well, improve teaching and learning. Yet, the method of decontextualized evaluation and the high-stakes nature of the assessment renders these skills nearly moot.

Just between the chosen words of this poem, inherent in the line and paragraph breaks, we find the other Hydra heads—those that represent state and federal requirements like accreditation

reports and LiveText portfolios in our teacher preparation programs. As we discussed in the literature review, we observed that such portfolio systems “emphasized the bureaucratic aspects” of teacher preparation and, instead of advancing our program missions and visions, occupied much of our and our students’ time on endless paperwork and repetitive reporting. Part of the sense of hopelessness and confusion we reflect in this poem relates to our dismay that the new assessments and measures “failed to take advantage of the potential in portfolios to deepen teacher learning” (Zeichner, 2010, p. 1548). We wonder what impact these policies have on our TPPs’ curricular choices. For example, to meet reporting requirements, our programs have created or revised assignments; as a result, LiveText portfolios and other assignments directly tied to program reports have a significant effect on our teacher candidates, and on us. Due to these program requirements, we *all* experience professional dissonance; we are not providing to our students what we believe they need to be good teachers in these moments and they would likely agree. Our *responsibilities are in direct conflict with our stated program goals and values* as we feed the head of the Hydra that’s *taking [our student’s] time and soul*. What happens when we do not speak our hopelessness into existence? In what ways does this null curriculum— what we are *not* teaching—communicate to our teacher candidates what is just and ethical amidst neoliberal and market-driven forces in education? We investigate below the ways that this hopelessness moves us to and through the safety and dangers of silence.

The Safety and Danger in Silences

What were we to do with this hopelessness and confusion? Once we understood our new contexts well enough to be able to make cogent arguments that the individual policies were part of a larger neoliberal narrative and agenda in teacher preparation, we wondered how to move forward amidst and beyond our feelings of hopelessness. Our data revealed that, in many instances, we found ourselves silent. In the poem below, we explore both the stated and tacit rationales behind this silence.

Silence(d)(ing)

Silence has a sound, or so
Simon and Garfunkel tell us.

We look around the room—
It doesn’t matter what room,
because though in different places, the conversations are the same.

Mouths slightly agape but bodies stiff and still,
eyes wide...or darting... or wondering... or quiet.

Here, silence sounds like waiting
for someone else to speak.

Someone who

Has tenure

Is male

Is in power

Faculty pass a new GRE policy

with no discussion, no dissent,

just the noiseless acceptance that moving up in

U.S. News rankings is even

a laudable goal.

Here, silence sounds like tired sighs and
our steady and resigned click clack of nails on keys:

“dear prospective student [of color]”

“thank you again for meeting with us last week”

“we were impressed with your background and your passion”

“we cannot accept you this fall because of our new guidelines”

“would you be willing to retake the GREs?”

edTPA is driving all of our assignments

“let’s remove the reflections; they already do those for edTPA”

“they need more practice with lesson plans; we really need to get them ready for edTPA”

Here, silence sounds like paying Pearson to
Capitalize on students’ dreams.

It won’t hurt to partner with TFA, we’re told,
because *we can help them get better.*

And they can help us... what?

design snazzy websites and flyers?

recruit more White savior teachers?

(We have enough of those.)

Here, silence sounds like *closing my laptop,*
standing up, and walking out.

But who or what are we waiting for?

Our silence can’t protect us.

Or our students.

Here, silence sounds like an illusion of safety.

So sometimes, we speak...

“but what if we just submit the application to the dean?”

“it will just be rejected; the top floor does not care about anything else besides GPA,” they
say...

“they need more edTPA practice,

they’ve already had enough of that social justice stuff,”

So I say

“but that should always be our focus”

my silent voice now loud,

shaky.

Sometimes this transition from silence to speaking works.

That student? He got in.

Because I submitted the application

and it slipped through. I found a way,

a silent way,

to resist the neoliberal positioning of university rankings.

But, other times, our speaking up seems not to matter,
as if we were silent all along.
That syllabus? It's all edTPA.
A senior faculty member stood up, pointed, and interrupted.
I cannot tell you what was said,
But the words matter less than the outcome of
More silence.
Maybe it was something about trying to include more social justice next year.
Next year.
Next year...
Next year?

That meeting when we railed against the silence? We apologized after...
"Please accept my apologies for my comments to you..."
"Know that my frustration was in
no way directed to you individually..."

Because
as Simon and Garfunkel explain
no one dare disturb
the sound of silence.

This poem reflects our use of silence to understand and survive the market-driven and neoliberal reform agendas in teacher education, and offers smaller moments of resistance when we do speak up. To make sense of our silence across the multiple heads of the Hydra of Teacher Education, we draw on Lorde's (1977) writings on breaking silence. As Lorde suggests, we understand that we are "never really a whole person if [we] remain silent, because there's always that one little piece inside of [us] that wants to be spoken out" (p. 42). We draw heavily here on her voice, and we are thankful for a scholar who helped us think through our silence in the midst of fighting the Hydra of Teacher Education.

Lorde (1977) suggests that "on the cause of silence, each one of us draws her own fear—fear of contempt, of censure, or some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation" (p. 42). The causes of our silence were all of these things, and our silence was borne out of a desire for protection and professional survival. The poem above reveals that we oftentimes use silence, first, to understand who we are standing with and who (or what) we might need to push against. We realize, quickly, that faculty come from different ideological and philosophical standpoints on reforms such as edTPA, portfolio assessments, the use of GREs and university ranking requirements, and more. What results is silence for protection. Indeed, as many untenured faculty are counseled, we sometimes found ourselves thinking we would "just wait until we have tenure" to speak up and speak out. We rationalized our silence even as we knew that "while we wait in silence for that final luxury of fearlessness, the weight of that silence will choke us" (Lorde, 1977, p. 44).

As we developed an understanding of who is standing with us, we moved to consider our silence as an act of protest. We stood up and walked out, or we shut our laptops, folded our arms, and disengaged from the discussion. We feared the words we want to say and hoped that our silent objections will be enough. We thought, like Lorde (1977), that "the machine will try to

grind us into dust anyway, whether or not we speak” (p. 42). But we walked away from those meetings carrying disappointment and feared that our silence was insignificant and an easy way out. As Lorde suggests,

we can sit in our corners mute forever while our sisters and ourselves are wasted, while our children are distorted and destroyed, while our earth is poisoned, we can sit in our safe corners as mute as bottles, and still we will be no less afraid. (p. 42)

Finally, we acknowledge that our silence is sometimes about survival. Even in healthy work environments, it is tied to survival as we look around the room, wondering who on the promotion and tenure committee might disagree with what we say. We have been socialized as academics to think this way. But more often it is tied to surviving the workweek that already exceeds the 40 hours we are (under)paid for. We hear our mentors, our deans, and our faculty support groups tell us to skip those meetings, disengage from the “swamp” of teacher education (Cole & Knowles, 1996), and instead focus on writing for publication and submitting grant applications that requires the use of those value-added test scores and university reports of high edTPA pass rates that we just (silently) rejected. How do we engage in this work of resistance when we are supposed to publish? How do we apply for grants that require the use of measures designed by and for the neoliberal agenda in education? We are afraid we will not survive, so we draw on Lorde’s (1977) writings on silence once again: “Of course I am afraid—you can hear it in my voice—because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation and that always seems fraught with danger” (p. 42).

Tension between Acquiescence and Resistance

Moving from silence to action (or purposeful non-action) is always a complicated step. In our next poem, we share our lived tension between acquiescing to and resisting neoliberal policies in teacher education. The poem reflects this constant tension by conceptualizing it as *a game of tug of war*. The tug of war reflects the back and forth pushes and pulls, the starts and stops of our being complicit in neoliberal ideology and resisting it, or wanting to resist it, through various means. The title of this poem illustrates that this contest is dirty business with painful and scarring consequences.

The Blood on Our Hands

Today, I sat in a meeting
and suggested I could do a seminar on *Creative Insubordination for teachers*,
But then, in another meeting,
I did not push through a Black male PhD applicant’s file
because of GRE scores below the threshold now suggested by the president.

Today, I sat in a workshop
and asked that we put up a website link that says “*Why NOT edTPA*”
But then, in another workshop,
I quietly took notes and learned the rules, and only wrote that
this is not what I want my role to be.

Today, I sat with my students
and created one slide explaining edTPA,
followed by 5 slides pushing back against it.
But then wondered if I only made it worse for my students.

Today, I sat at my desk
and wrote to my students
If you choose not to complete the assessment, I will support you.
You know that I am fighting for you.
But then emailed the program director
and agreed to *review more portfolios.*

Today, I sat with my sister scholars
And wondered *If we don't speak up now, then who will?*
Or when will they?
Should we do something before it's too late?
And they held my hands and, together,
we envisioned standing up.

Today, I stood up when
I literally could not bring myself to engage in
implementing this program at our institution.

Today, I said
I will not do this. I'm not going to score it,
I won't teach about it in my classes,
I won't attend the training sessions.
I just flat out won't do it.
This is against everything I believe in.

Today, I played tug of war
because
My chosen route of resistance has consequences
and I worry about them.
My lack of involvement has implications for my colleagues.
And now, I'm not "at the table"
to help others stop sitting, to hold their hands,
And stand up. Together.

Children don't always notice
the blisters, the calluses,
the blood on their hands
After a tough game of
tug of war.
It's easy to concentrate
on the game,
the potential for victory, the swaying
back and forth of
your body and the feeling of the
rope in your hands.

As adults,
after we stop sitting
and stand up to resist,
we lay down the rope,
look at our bloody hands, and
feel the tension in our backs and
Our hearts.

This poem reflects the challenges we faced in responding to neoliberal reforms in teacher education. This tug of war was a constant struggle between what we wanted to do (resist) and what we felt we had to do (acquiesce) in order to keep our jobs. We understand fully the danger of our choices; as we described above, Madeloni (2014) received a letter of non-renewal terminating her contract after she supported her students in resisting the edTPA and Knowles (Cole & Knowles, 1996) writes about being denied tenure for work “in the swamp” of teacher education. As Richmond, Bartell, and Dunn (2016) suggest, we must “search for equilibrium between the world that currently exists and the world that we wish existed” (p. 103); we worry, often, that our disengagement could be a form of injustice for our colleagues and our students.

We recognized that some resistance on our part meant that our colleagues may shoulder more burden if our resistance takes the form of opting—as we refuse to administer the edTPA or attend partnership meetings with TFA. Ultimately this meant that our colleagues—colleagues with less power or privilege *or* those who may support the use of edTPA or partnership opportunities with TFA—were left to do the work. This poem demonstrates how we grappled with these choices. As teacher educators committed to continual debate about the overall purposes of schooling, we wanted to be at those meetings. We understand through writing this poem what Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2009) suggest—current discussions around a “culture of evidence” are simply the “latest technique for reaching goals that are already clearly established and squarely located within the current accountability regime” (p. 465). Our resistance makes us absent from opportunities to engage in true scholarly debate when discussions around a culture of evidence drives the conversations in our TPPs. We agree with Dover, Shultz, Smith, and Duggan (2015b) that debate on the neoliberal policies and practices in teacher education should continue and “teacher educators will not—and we believe should not—always agree regarding the best approach to new policies, the best means of assessing their candidates, or the contextually-specific needs of their school communities” (p. 1). We worry, however, that the dialogue, at times, is halted as we complain, disagree, disengage, and then (oftentimes) comply.

Even as we resisted in small ways, such as by telling our students that we would support them if they chose not to complete standardized assessments or by leading workshops on creative insubordination for teachers, we still felt—and feel—complicit in a broken system. Our hands are bloody because institutions, as they are designed to do, institutionalize. And, as part of those institutions, we, too, have become institutionalized. We realize that part of the struggle with these small-scale efforts illustrate what Picower and Mayorga (2015) explain happened in response to K-12 education reforms in New York City: our efforts are often piecemeal. They respond to one reform at a time, rather than fighting the neoliberal body undergirding each of the Hydra heads. This constant battle with multiple reforms never actually addresses the greater neoliberal attack on our profession and serves to deplete teacher educators and can lead to burnout (Banks [Roberts], 2017). This burnout is evident in our poems as we work to engage in research that examines the impact of neoliberal policies and practices on teacher candidates, their students, and on us as teacher educators. Until we know more about these impacts, we must “collectively resist policies that are

more responsive to the politics of privatization than our profession itself” (Dover, Shultz, Smith, & Duggan, 2015b, p. 3). We can only do this, we think, with collective resistance.

Collective Resistance

The final finding from our analysis was our emergence from silence and acquiescence to collective resistance. Harkening back to the Hydra mythology, it is important to consider that Hercules is unable to defeat the Hydra alone. He calls out to his nephew for help. Together the two develop a strategy and then work together to defeat the seemingly undefeatable Hydra (Picower & Mayorga, 2015). Similarly, we united with others to make sense of the realities of the neoliberal reforms we were facing and then strategized ways to dismantle them. Unique to this portion of our data was the use of collective pronouns and ideas, rather than imagining or surmising our efforts as solitary. In contrast to the darker themes (literally and figuratively) of the previous poems, this poem uses the metaphor and symbol of light to express hopefulness in this hard work as we unite with others to resist the effects of the reforms.

Light Can Lead to Bonds

A bright unity has the power
To shine, show the injustice,
Illuminate the reality behind
The clouds of the neoliberal spectacle.

Can the light lead us to others, working
Toiling, laboring though weary,
To fight, to resist, to say “NO”?
Can the light guide us to
coalesce,
co-author, coordinate, co-plan, co-create
Action steps to
discuss, disrupt, discredit, disavow, diss
Those policies that destroy.

And through the clouds, we see
Others who *want to know how to fight back.*
No one is talking about it, everyone here has caved
Or they’re being drowned out by Pearson’s machine.
Instead we *look to Massachusetts, Seattle, anywhere,*
for examples of how this is done.

We use our oneness of purpose to push back
and poke holes in the cumulus masses of
busted theory and rhetoric of the takeover of teacher education.

We plan teach-ins so our students can teach out.
And when they come for us,
for our emails,
With accusations of
“Indoctrination,” “political campaigning,” and “hate speech”

for talking about racism and White supremacy and
the corporate destruction of public education,
We help each other remember the light, the unity, the
darkness that comes before dawn.

With our pens and our bodies and our students as proxies,
we teach and we write and we organize,
fight in the light assiduously or behind closed doors surreptitiously

When the Hydra rears its ugly heads
One by one,
Producing veil-like clouds
We are not the only ones to see it,
We call out, there will be no echo—instead others join us and step into the light.

This final poem, focused on light and unity, highlights our early attempts at collective resistance. Though oftentimes difficult, we did engage in participatory policy analysis (Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016) as we organized events around and co-authored this and other manuscripts on the impact of several neoliberal Hydra heads in teacher education. We supported one another even as our collective resistance was clandestinely recorded, questioned, and investigated. As discussed abstractly in the poem, one illustrative example of our collective resistance is a teach-in that we planned in 2013. This event was inspired by our feelings of hopelessness and outrage related to yet another neoliberal manifestation of the standardization of curricula in the ban on Ethnic Studies curriculum and texts in Tucson, Arizona. Our frustration first and then our commitment to social justice inspired us to organize a day-long event with guest speakers from Tucson, workshops on liberatory pedagogy and curriculum analysis, and scholarly presentations on ethnic studies. We joined with other faculty, students, activists, and community members with the explicit goal of resisting the neoliberal and neoconservative censorship of texts in favor of more standardized curriculum. With over 150 attendees in person and another 150 who joined our online real-time streaming, we pledged for more collective efforts on this topic. Shortly after what we perceived as a successful event and what, as one participant wrote “made [me] remember why I want to be a teacher,” we received notice that someone had been in the audience and had recorded our presentations and conversations. Though as organizers we were pleased with the results of the teach-in, we soon discovered that there are risks to our acts of resistance. The recording of the teach-in had been shared as part of a public testimony at a state hearing about another educational matter, and legislators pledged to investigate the “indoctrination” that was happening at our universities. Among other fall-outs, Alyssa, as the leader of the event, was requested to turn over any and all emails relating to the event, so they could be investigated for such claims. We were all untenured at the time, as were most of the other faculty who helped plan and execute the teach-in, and such harsh and unfounded rhetoric shook us to our core. The confusion, hopelessness, silence, and acquiescence that followed was clear and, most likely, expected. It is only now, years later, that we are finally able to reflect on this experience and to talk about both our resisting and our being resisted.

The writing of this poem has helped us remember that it is this collective work, these defining moments, that brought us together as colleagues, sister scholars, and friends. Yet what also surfaced during the collection of data for and subsequent writing of this poem was a distinct difference between this poem and the other three; this poem has fewer words, fewer

lines, and was written out of a data set much smaller than the others. While we are heartened that this last poem is filled with light, togetherness, and support for resistance, we are concerned when we consider the statistics of this poem in contrast to the other three. We wonder why, for example, this poem on collective resistance is less than half the length of Poem 3 focused on the safety and danger of silence. We worry when we realize that this poem has the smallest ratio of italicized words to total words; only about two in every seven words come directly from our data set (or about 30%) in contrast to the other poems that were made up of an average of 50% italics. This may mean that we simply spoke and wrote more about the topics in those first three poems—about hopelessness, silence, and acquiescence—and therefore had more data to pull from. It would not be surprising that our minds and hearts were focus on the turmoil felt in those poems. Alternatively, and more troubling to us, is that our collective resistance poem is shorter, with few data chunks to draw on, because we are, sadly, doing much less of this work. Also troubling is the underlying theme in our data—and in this poem—that collective action may oftentimes push us back to spaces of confusion, hopelessness, silence, or acquiescence. We see this and other smaller acts of collective resistance as prompting us to represent our work as cyclical in nature.

On one hand we have wondered if our collective resistance is a form of protection as scholars. After all, this is what we are paid to do, isn't it? We, particularly as social justice-focused teacher educators, ascribe to a critical research framework where our work and scholarship critique and challenge the status quo (Picower, 2012). To borrow from Lorde (1984) where she critiques white feminists' privileging of heterosexuality and excluding and marginalizing black and/or lesbian women, we see ourselves as using "the master's tools to dismantle the master's house" (p. 101). Though we believe Lorde to be asserting that it is impossible to enact real, lasting change in society through feminist ideology by using the very same forms of oppression or "master's tools" (racism and homophobia) that the patriarchy had been using for centuries, in the "safety" of our roles as university professors we have reclaimed and appropriated the tools of the academy in our critique of it. We have collectively joined with other scholars to use our research agendas, teaching practice, and university service—in essence our day jobs—to work to eliminate the neoliberal reforms set to infiltrate teacher education by critiquing our TPPs.

On the other hand, resistance is perilous and we have felt the sting of being silenced in many forms. Any safety we might think we have—individually or collectively—is a mirage, fully out of reach. Instead we have been warned that though resistance work yields results to raise awareness of injustice with our students or in the school communities where they will someday teach, or with legislators or policymakers, this activism and resistance does not have an "impact factor" and it will not help junior scholars earn tenure. Methodologies and qualitative work that privileges the voices and experiences of teacher educators and their students often raise questions about rigor. We have received questions from administrators regarding whether we are publishing our scholarship about resistance in the "right" journals, with the primary question being about impact factor and not whether or not the work is far-reaching enough or accessible to those who can really benefit from it.

It was not until writing these poems—engaging in the performative act of poetic inquiry—that we could see how this cycle of hopelessness, silence, and individual acquiescence and resistance might have led to less collective resistance. We continue to embark on this journey *per hydra head*; it is, in short, an exercise in futility to go through this journey with each new policy. As we write about multiple heads of the hydra in each poem, we realize there was little effort in those moments—in those emails, those comments, those written reflections—to

make sense of how these reforms interacted with and fed the heads of others. This might be related, in part, to where we are in our careers. Erica is tenured and wrote more often about resistance across these heads of the hydra. As we considered our data, we realized too that each of us can pinpoint a policy that started us on this journey. For example, for Stephanie it was most certainly experiences with edTPA—when neoliberalism came forcefully into the academy and into her daily work—that pushed her to engage individually and collectively in this journey. She finally, like the others, had no choice but to engage the fight. We see, in writing these poems, how entering at different times—consumed more fully by one head or another—makes it difficult to come together in collective resistance. This helps us to see the importance of deeply reflective and creative self-study, especially when engaging in work that we know needs to be grounded in the collective. How can we engage with others in this work without first understanding our own motivations, hesitations, and individual acts? We wonder, now, how our collective resistance might look different moving forward. Are we now more poised to attack the hydra at its base? Are we ready to attack the multiple facets of neoliberalism as one looming, scary, and rapidly growing beast? We continue to grapple with this together, and wonder if this is possible.

Implications and Conclusion

This poetic inquiry has explored the intersections of policy reforms in teacher preparation and our identities as teacher educators, as we attempt to reconcile the current policy environment with the significant effects it has on our students and our profession. In particular, we have explored the trajectory of our understanding of and resistance to certain reforms, conceptualized here as the Hydra of Teacher Education. Though these are individual reforms at the local, state and national level, they are all heads spouting off a larger, stronger singular body of neoliberal ideology. In conclusion, we outline this study's implications for research, policy, and the practice of teacher education.

Implications for Research

There is a burgeoning body of critical research on the effects of neoliberal policy on TPPs and teacher educators (e.g. Berlak, 2010; Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013). To contribute to this area of research, we propose that teacher educators should continue to investigate the ways in which neoliberal policies influence their identities as teacher educators at all stages of the career span. Additionally, research with preservice teachers to determine how the Hydra of Teacher Education impacts their learning and teacher identity development would fill an important gap in the literature and be of value to faculty looking to support their students in meaningful ways. This inquiry could also support teacher educators' ability to refine their teaching practice to resist neoliberal policies in their classrooms as they would be knowledgeable of the supports their candidates need. This could lead to increased agency among both teacher educators and teacher candidates where both groups explore research and pedagogy as a means of resistance. In fact, this work might aim to extend the collection of essays found in Diamond and Mullen's (1999) book on arts-based inquiries and teacher development by focusing on teachers' and teacher educators' artistic and analytical resistance practices in *neoliberal settings*.

Implications for Policy

Our study connects to other scholarship that demonstrates the harmful effects of neoliberal policymaking and the Hydra of teacher education. However, the federal government recently

proposed regulations for teacher preparation that seemed to *dismiss* such scholarship. A coalition statement written in late 2016, signed by 29 professional organizations, highlights what was problematic in the proposed regulations: “We are particularly concerned about a federal higher education regulation placing unfunded mandates on PK-12 schools, districts, tribes, states, and institutions of higher education. The regulation encroaches on local, tribal, and state decision making, as well as on the academic autonomy of higher education” (p. 1). The statement went on to argue that such regulations that link the success and funding of TPPs to the scores of students of TPP program graduates would have a negative effect on many elements of the educational process, including universities that serve high-needs communities, on the diversity of the teaching profession, and on programs that are struggling for funding. And while these proposed federal regulations were ultimately struck down in March 2017, other organizations—like the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP)—continue to lead efforts to evaluate the ‘effectiveness’ of teacher preparation programs through the use of value-added measures, student-growth percentiles, and student learning and development objectives required by the state. Though the jurisdiction and control (CAEP vs. federal) has shifted momentarily, the results—market-based reforms that assume raising and/or standardizing quantifiable criteria will produce better teachers—are the same. We wholeheartedly supported (and still support) the coalition statement shared above and would add to it that such proposed regulations, and any similar regulations to come, threaten to sustain and even embolden the Hydra of Teacher Education, shoring up its core of neoliberalism and making room for other neoliberal reforms to push their way into our colleges and universities.

If we were to create policy related to teacher education, we would envision something to support programs for increasing the length of teacher preparation; providing funding for grow-your-own programs and other programs designed in partnership with local communities with local contexts in mind (see, e.g. Cross & Thomas, 2017), supporting financially students enrolled in student teaching who would normally be prevented from leaving full-time employment; and challenging high-stakes entrance and certification exams that disproportionately disenfranchise preservice teachers of color (Cross, 2017; Petchauer, 2014). At present, each of these initiatives are happening in individual programs and spaces, but they have to garner support from grants or local resources. Were such endeavors supported through state or federal funding plans, they could be more sustainable and effective.

Implications for Teacher Education and Teacher Educators

Our study highlighted the stark reality that teacher educators face today as we try to engage with our colleagues and students in meaningful ways. We must realize that our pre-service teachers are watching us and considering the ways that we are, or are not, modeling the practices we say we want them to embody in the future. The way we—as teacher educators—live out our professional commitments has the opportunity to advance the experience of pre-service teachers if we can give them honest, clear examples of how we struggle for justice in both K-12 schools and our own current work environments.

As we try to determine the most effective ways to have significant impact in our field, we ask ourselves, should we engage in small acts of resistance across multiple heads of the Hydra, or should we aim for a massive blow to the body? It seems logical that a severe blow at the very root of neoliberal policy that would shift the course of its effects on teacher education would be the ideal solution. This massive blow would need coordinated efforts—both individual and collective acts of resistance from teachers, teacher educators, students, school leaders, policy actors, and many others. Yet we, as individual teacher educators must consider our personal circumstances, such as tenure status, teaching load, and positionality in the TPP, to determine if this is viable. We wonder, then,

how teacher educators can manage their fear of speaking out, understanding that overcoming this fear—or working through it—is a process. As Lorde (1977) writes, “We can learn to work and speak when we are afraid in the same way we have learned to work and speak when we are tired” (p. 43). There are many considerations that determine the magnitude of the resistance teacher educators can enact. Thus, even as we call for continued collective resistance, we do not wish to minimize the significance of individual acts of resistance.

Another part of this questioning lies in the cyclical nature of our own (and other) teacher educators’ experiences within the market-driven agendas in teacher education. At times we feel bold and energetic and resist these policies with great force and agency. At other times, our energy wanes, the anxiety builds in the face of multiple assaults on our professional agency, and our silence encompasses us for a season. In this way, we must find meaningful ways to resist, and they do not always have to be couched in “traditional” forms of resistance. Many teacher educators could use scholarship itself as resistance, as we have attempted to do here and in our other work. We can also connect with other scholars and activists who are resisting these policies, learn what works best at their institutions, and determine if and how similar efforts could be made within and across contexts. As much as is possible, teacher educators can also choose teaching, service, and scholarship opportunities that support their philosophies and that, implicitly or explicitly, rejects neoliberal ideology. Amidst this resistance, it is also important to remember that activist and educator burnout is real, and we must engage in self-care in order to be able to be of most use to our students and our colleagues. We do this, however, with Lorde’s (1997) words in mind:

My silences had not protected me.
Your silence will not protect you.
But for every real word spoken,
for every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths for which I am still seeking,
I had made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed... (p. 41)

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