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RECONSTRUCTING RACE:

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

In January of 2006, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the flooding of approximately eighty percent of New Orleans, while over half of the city's population of nearly half a million people remained displaced and most flooded buildings and infrastructures remained unrepaired and uninhabitable, the state of Louisiana mailed letters of termination to nearly 7,000 teachers and school employees of the New Orleans Public Schools. Two months before, under the aegis of an agency created in 2003, the Recovery School District (RSD), the state took control of the ninety percent of schools deemed failing by testing metrics set by state law and set the state onto a path of converting nearly all of them into charter schools, promising a radical break with the past of bureaucratized incompetence and corruption and a model for rapid improvement of test scores, graduation rates, and school safety. Then Governor Kathleen Blanco claimed that this step was necessary for the recovery of the city and that "families won't come back without good public schools."[1] Furthermore, education reformers sought to prove that charter schools could "break the cycle of poverty" afflicting black and brown low-income communities around the country. They sought to demonstrate that urban schools could be the sole "lever" in improving the life chances of students in these communities absent broader interventions in social welfare and racial capitalism (Chait 2015). Working under the belief that an injection of fresh human capital was necessary, over the next few years charter school networks partnered with non-profits, philanthropists, and politicians to send another batch of

[1] The state of Louisiana was eligible to seize control of schools which were deemed "failing" by failing to meet a certain level on their school performance scores, an annual metric composed of student test scores and graduation rates, among other factors. This would have authorized the RSD to take over 68 New Orleans schools. However, in a special session in November 2005, the state legislature made an exception allowing for the state to take control of schools which had school performance scores below average, adding 34 additional New Orleans schools to RSD oversight. This exception was only applied to schools in the city of New Orleans itself. 13 schools remained under control of the Orleans Parish School Board, as they had achieved school performance scores above the state average. This measure was opposed by many of the legislators representing Orleans Parish itself (Maggi 2005).

letters, this time to thousands of college seniors and young professionals from all over the United States inviting them to come work in New Orleans as teachers. At the beginning of this experiment, 94% of public school children in New Orleans were African-American and 77% under the poverty line. At many charters over the subsequent ten years, a district teaching force which was over 80% African American and local became almost 50% white and largely without historical ties to or local knowledge of New Orleans.[2] This shift in racial composition of school administration and conversion to a private management model on a district level is unprecedented in the United States.

This project is fundamentally concerned with New Orleans' charter school reforms as an *experimental* formation that is transforming education professionals as working subjects and schooling as a generative site of racialized identities and politics. Charter school teachers and a proliferating array of other kinds of education professionals in non-profits, foundations, and education businesses are key actors in the shifting nature of rights and responsibilities between populations and institutions in the United States, from a vision of schools as social and civic institutions to credentialing apparatuses which confer skills upon atomized individuals. Charters have been characterized by opponents and boosters alike as a "market-based" or "neoliberal" reform of public schools (Giroux 2011), as invasion of the public by the private and the state by the market. I make the formation of education reform as a form of racialized labor intelligible by tracking three dynamics: 1) the "human capital" practices and workplace cultures of charter schools themselves, 2) the development of new roles for brokering racialized expertise in education non-profits, and 3) the turn of education entrepreneurs towards "design thinking" as a

[2] Student enrollment in public schools dropped from 65,610 students before the storm to 24,969 the first full year schools were open in 2006-07. In the 2014-15 school year the enrolled population had risen to 43,948. The public school student population also changed from 93% black before the storm to 87% black afterwards, consistent with the change in the city as whole from 67% to 60% black before and after the storm. The youth population has declined relative the rest of the city however. (Louisiana Department of Education 2016)

means of incorporating racialized expertise into new economies of data and intelligence gathering. By investigating education reform as a *form* of work, I plan to demonstrate the means by which charters are not only changing labor practices, but work as a generator of racialized assemblages. New Orleans' charter school based reform has been criticized for ignoring racial politics and the democratic will of the majority black population of the city's public schools. *Reconstructing Race* argues that, a decade into the reform project, charter schools and education reform organizations have responded to these criticisms by developing increasingly sophisticated forms of racial recognition and that these forms of racialized expertise are themselves practices of racecraft.

I came to this project after having taught at a charter school in Harlem as a Teach for America Corps Member for two years after graduating college and before starting grad school. The school I worked in was a No Excuses[3] style school, with strict disciplinary codes and high academic expectations attuned to test scores above all. I was told during my interview for the position that working at this charter school would be "more like working at a high powered law firm than a traditional public school." The building our school was placed in was shared with a traditional public school and there were conflicts over space the entire two years I spent there. Our school network attempted to take over an entire school building down the street from a "failing school" during my first year, but they were thwarted after consistent protest by community members supportive of this other traditional public school. I remember hearing picket lines outside my window as I attempted to teach my kindergarten science class as well as the passions on display as John White, the future State Superintendent of Louisiana Public

[3] No Excuses schools are characterized by high behavioral and academic expectations for all students focused on test scores, strict disciplinary codes, extended school days, college preparatory curriculum and cultures, and an intense focus on building branded "school culture" and community values. The model is the most popular style of charter school in New Orleans and its influence can be seen in charter schools across the United States. Each one of the schools visited discussed in this manuscript could be fairly described as a No Excuses school.

Schools, attempted to facilitate a public hearing on whether or not my charter school network would be able to take over the new school building. My principal constantly reminded us that we were doing some of the most important work in the world, that we were putting the lie to the notion that low income children of color couldn't be served by public schools, and that we were going to prove that it could be done. Watching Harlem parents, politicians, and activists defend their "failing school" outside my classroom window and at the public hearing, I knew that charter schools were about more than pedagogy – they were changing the racial politics of urban education.

How did charter schools come to be seen as the solution to educational inequality, and why did Louisiana and New Orleans come to embrace this model? Originally proposed in 1974 by Dr. Ray Budde, charter schools were framed as a progressive reform of school districts. Rather than have school operations dictated by a centralized administration, Budde proposed that groups of educators contract with the district to run individual schools. Ideally these schools would use their greater autonomy from district mandates and localized expertise to develop innovative methods of schooling. The concept did not gain much traction until the late 1980's, when American Federation of Teachers President Al Shanker,

> …outlined an idea for a new kind of public school where teachers could experiment with fresh and innovative ways of reaching students. Mr. Shanker estimated that only one-fifth of American students were well served by traditional classrooms. In charter schools, teachers would be given the opportunity to draw upon their expertise to create high-performing educational laboratories from which the traditional public schools could learn" (Kahlenberg and Potter 2014).

Conceived as a pedagogical experiment, Minnesota became the first state to authorize a charter school law and in 1995 two Teach for America alums founded the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) schools which is the most recognized charter school network in the country, with schools

in Texas, California, Lousiana, and New York and pioneered the No Excuses school model. Given the discourses of failure that surrounded urban public schools after the 1983 publication of "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" by President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education, charter schools came to be seen as a promising means of fixing educational inequality, absent broader transformations in racial segregation, capitalism, and the welfare state.

While charter schools were originally proposed as a pedagogical experiment for teachers, they came to be valued by other constituencies as a means of organizational and managerial reform. The idea that "teachers' unions have become the single biggest impediment to school reform" became a kind of commonsense among education reformers. You can find the line in films like *Waiting for Superman* or a David Brooks column in the New York Times. Critics of teachers unions believed that charter schools would improve education because they could circumvent collective bargaining agreements with teachers' unions as independent contractors. This agenda dovetailed with the movement to impose punitive accountability structures on schools who failed to meet testing goals, entrenched by the 2002 passing of the "No Child Left Behind Act". In 2003, Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) member Leslie Jacobs shepherded the passing of Act 9, a bill which gave the state authority to temporarily take over "failing schools" and operate them directly or contract them to charter schools. This act was opposed by the New Orleans teachers union, the United Teachers of New Orleans, as well as member of the Orleans Parish School Board, as these measures were seen as targeting New Orleans specifically, allowing a red state to usurp control of the largest public institution in a black and blue city. Thus the legal architecture for a takeover of New Orleans schools was already in place years before Hurricane Katrina, and Jacobs and her supporters used

the dislocations of the storm aftermath to enact a sweeping agenda to convert nearly all of the city's schools to charters.

Sitting in the main office of a recently opened charter school in the Treme in the summer of 2011, I asked the founding principal, Pablo[4], "What kind of teachers are you looking for?" Pablo responds to my question without hesitation, with the pace of a man used to the nearly impossibly urgent tempo of running a No Excuses charter school. "We want people who can hit the ground running."[5] I pressed Pablo on where he got his teachers from. I wanted to know what their backgrounds were. Pablo unapologetically replies, "We try to stay local, but it's hard to get quality. The teachers we have now, to be blunt, are smarter than they were ten years ago… I'm just focused on getting the best. I used to think it was about getting teachers who were mission driven and had cultural competency, but now *it's about doing the work*."[6] Education reform organizations like Teach for America[7] have long emphasized hiring teachers who are "mission driven", who believe and are invested in the big picture goal of ending racialized and class based educational inequity, rather than merely interested in affecting a specific classroom, school, or community. Furthermore their selection models have increasingly focused on evaluating candidate's "mindsets" and perceptions of low-income communities of color, assessing whether they view these communities with "deficit mentalities" or express curiosity and empathy. Not all education reform organizations and charter schools agree with this approach, instead believing that the best teachers are those with records of achievement in elite colleges as well as work

[4] All ethnographic interlocutors are identified by pseudonyms. Public figures and statements are identified with real names.
[5] Given rates of turnover each year and a reliance on younger teachers, principals have become increasingly focused on hiring people who can "fit" into their school models. After the post Katrina reforms, the proportion of teachers with five or fewer years of experience increased from 33% to 54% and the proportion of teachers with greater than twenty years of experience decreased from 34% to 5%. Furthermore teacher turnover per year increased from 7% to 18%. (Barrett and Harris 2015)
[6] Emphasis mine
[7] Approximately half of teachers in New Orleans charter schools are Teach for America corps members or alumni.

ethics and organizational capacities which will facilitate the long hours demanded by charter schools. Given the focus of some wings of education reform on core beliefs and cultural attitudes and the focus on work ethic by others, I'm left wondering how Pablo is narrowing his focus with a phrase like "doing the work". What kind of "work" is this new charter school teacher doing, and what kind of institutions and subject positions are being produced to enable such work? Pablo's circumscription indexes for us the fact that work in education is not as straightforward as it may seem. What counts as "the work" is determined in a field of struggles that are informed by history, culture, and politics, a field that this manuscript takes up as a key site for understanding the racial formations (Omi and Winant 1994) emerging from education reform.

However, teachers and school administrators aren't the only ones doing the work of education reform. In over a decade since the takeover of the New Orleans public school system by state government, the city has seen the proliferation of institutions and organizations that contribute to an agenda of reforming and improving schools, part of larger trend of the expansion of civil society organizations in the years after the storm (Flaherty 2010). Most directly, we've seen the establishment of over forty charter school management organizations in the city, many with national footprints. But the expansion of charter schools have also been directed and supported by the dozens of education non-profits of various scales and agendas, from alternative certification organizations like Teach for America and Teach Nola, which provide the "human capital" that charter school leaders claim they need to function, to New Schools for New Orleans which provide resources and expertise for charter school networks. Furthermore, there has been exponential growth in the number of entrepreneurs and education related businesses providing services and products for charter schools. This is not just a matter of the multiplication of institutional structures, but of a diversification of the kinds of labor and expertise that support

school systems. Whereas public schools in the United States were originally envisioned as organic community institutions and the governance structures of public schools are highly decentralized compared to other wealthy nations, charter schools rely on an institutional ecology of foundations, non-profits, think tanks, and businesses. These ecologies don't centralize educational authority and regulation per se, yet they do subject schools to regimes of expertise dispersed over a greater array of institutional locations influenced by a smaller number of key actors like the Gates, Broad, and Walton Foundations. Teachers and school staff may have been the ones most dramatically affected by the post-Katrina , but in order for them to "do the work" reformers have constructed a broader web of education labor.

This project asks: how is the experimental development of this new kind of educational labor regime changing how work mediates the reconstruction of racialized difference in New Orleans and the United States at large? I propose that while charter school teachers and other education workers are often praised as innovators, they are also experimental subjects; their formation may be reconfiguring assemblages of raced and classed difference in New Orleans, as well as rearticulating accountability as an element of the American social contract, and reformulating the nature of work itself as an American utopian ideal and process of social and class reproduction by fostering the development of new forms of racialized expertise in education in the form of human capital practices, workplace affect, translational techniques, and entrepreneurial activity.

This project interrogates the formation of education workers under charter school reforms as newly mobile and ostensibly universal agents of social and economic reproduction in New Orleans. It does so through an ethnographic consideration of privately managed yet publicly funded charter schools as workplaces and the charter school teacher as an emergent category and

form of labor as well as workers in education non-profits and education entrepreneurs. While schooling has been theorized as a contributor to socioeconomic reproduction, public education's status as a site of labor remains ambiguous and often outright effaced – with teaching caught between an idea of mission, service, and profession. Some have indicated the promise of schools in shaping students as citizen-subjects (Dewey 1966) and others have emphasized the roles schools play in reproducing racial and class domination in various forms through establishing arbitrary hierarchies of racialized cultural values, preparing working class students solely for industrial labor, and molding students as disciplined subjects (Bourdieu 1977, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Foley 1994, Foucault 1977, Willis 1981). However, these meditations have emphasized above all how schools shape students. Teaching itself has been characterized as a feminized form of labor, somewhere between a job, a calling, and parenting (Apple 1986). Given the extraordinary new investments from national foundations, the federal and state governments, and transplant education reformers in this new form of schooling and new institutional assemblages to support it, what kind of work do these teachers, non-profit employees, and entrepreneurs do exactly? Charter school reform affords us the opportunity to reconsider education as a site of work and to explore structural and ideological innovations in labor carried out under school reform.

Rather than view the dramatic shift in the educator class of New Orleans as simply the substitution of some essentialized raced, classed, and gendered identities and subjects for others, I follow Rosa (2010), who cautions that difference and identity are not merely brought into schools, but are constituted there as well. Whereas Rosa highlights language among students as the medium of racialization, I emphasize labor as a form or racialized sociality. Public schools have been central institutions for the territorialization of race and class as well as the

management of deviance in low-income female-headed black households (Cohen 2004). After decades of "white flight" (Lassiter 2006), the return and increase of white presence in administration (though not as students and parents) through charter schools is a major rupture in raced, classed, and gendered frontiers in New Orleans. Charter schools in the city are considered a major national experiment – supporters like the Obama administration, Teach for America, and liberal journalists laud the audacity of the district wide scale of New Orleans reforms, hoping they will provide a model for urban public schools across the country. These reforms are also articulated to notions of a new beginning point for black politics on local and national scales (Ralph 2009). Ethnographies of labor have focused on the production of gender in and through industrial and service work (Freeman 2000, Ong 2010). Charter schools' focus on strict and punitive discipline and constitution as a remedy for long-running stereotyped notions of absent low-income black masculine influence raise the question of a re-gendering of teaching labor, though that is not an angle central to this investigation.[8]

This research also explores how the work of education reform is reshaping schooling as a fundamental element of the American social contract. It does so by considering how audit cultures and accountability structures reconfigure key liberal values of schooling as site of citizenship training around notions of entrepreneurship, cultivation of the self, choice, and individualized responsibility. Former RSD superintendent Paul Vallas called charter schools "freedom schools" as they have both the freedom to select and fire staff at will and they bring the freedom of a universally qualified and accountable education to marginalized populations (Lee 2010). In doing so, Vallas attempts to frame charter schools as following the legacy of the Civil

[8] While Moynihan (1965) and Wilson (1980) are often credited with popularizing the notion that the problem with African Americans is the inability of black men to become stable heads of household, the notion that racism has damaged black masculinity has existed since the antebellum years. Thus by intervening in the problem of black boys and men, charters step into a long historical trajectory of gendered solutions to America's race problem(s).

Rights Movement, not only by emphasizing freedom, but evoking the ways that freedom schools were grassroots responses to state sponsored racial terror. Vallas not only aligns charter school reform with the positive affective valences of the Civil Rights Movement, he also implicitly rewrites the history of freedom schools in line with neoliberal theories of labor management and public bureaucracy. This new managerial freedom allows teachers and other education professionals to be shaped as new kinds of accountable workers.

Under charter school based reform, teachers, administrators and charter management organizations are responsible to parents and students through new accountability regimes, from test score thresholds to regular technologically facilitated performance tracking and strict and systematized school discipline systems; how do these "audit cultures" (Strathern 2000) rearticulate the relationship between public and private as well as state and market (Lipman 2011)? Charter schools are often posed both positively and negatively as a "privatizing" or "market" force. However, I move beyond the essentialized boundaries of this economic framing and look to the ways that so called market forces and private spheres are culturally mediated and realized. Characterizations of black stewardship of public schools as failed, as well as the prominence and prevalence of black New Orleanians in government positions and public sector employment in general indicate that neoliberal critiques of the government are not "purely" economic, but operate along racialized logics. Stuart Hall once wrote that race is "the modality in which class is 'lived,' the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and 'fought through'" (Hall 1996) The audit cultures of New Orleans education reform are only intelligible through racialized understandings of the state and governance. There is no conception of the public sector and the state in the city that can be riven from race. Attending to interactions of accountability between charter school teachers and

parents, administrators, and other stakeholders can illuminate the "state effects" (Trouillot 2001) at play in ostensibly privatizing movements and demonstrates the reconfiguration of the institutions, scales, and collectivities involved in realizing freedom and equality as rights and responsibilities to be achieved through schooling.

Finally, the reformation of education work in New Orleans charter school reform shows how work itself is not a universal constant, but a contingent form of social organization which is also subject to historical, economic, political, and cultural logics. I investigate charter school reform as a site of work and theorize the formalistic innovations and cultural foundations of labor that can be elucidated from the work practices, training, administration, and organization of teachers and other education professionals. There is a rich history of anthropology and sociology of industrial and service work whose methods and conceptualizations of labor are as relevant to the charter school as they are to factories (Burawoy 1979, Ho 2009, Leidner 1993, Salzinger 2003). Charter schools are attempting to create teacher-workers who are mobile (ostensibly free from union restrictions, and not tied down to particular neighborhoods and identities), universal (their work quality and processes are commensurable across environments), and scalable (through competition they serve as incentives and models for other schools in the district and the nation at large) (Tsing 2012). By investigating education reform as a *form* of work, I plan to demonstrate the means by which charters are not only changing labor practices, but intensifying work as a generator of racialized assemblages through personalized and affectively charged discourses of professionalization and regimes of evaluation. Rather than becoming post-racial, these labor regimes instead increasingly rely on racialized forms of affective labor and expert forms of recognition.

While this research seeks to advance debates on racialization, labor, and neoliberalism, it has stakes in the politics of public education as well. In the summer of 2011, I spoke with a former public school teacher who had been fired after the state takeover. She claimed she felt forced to retire due to a lack of interest by charter schools in veteran black teachers as well as disrespected by new accountability regimes, refusing to take a new certification test after having taught for decades. She felt she had proven herself already. She was upset by her dismissal and felt she was owed an apology for the disregard of her years of service. Nevertheless, she resolved not to be bitter and still volunteered part time at various schools as well as attended regular workshops hosted by the teachers union and a group of progressive teachers critical of reform orthodoxies, where she mentored the young, mostly white and transplant teachers who have replaced her colleagues at charter schools. Despite the violence of their arrival, this teacher wanted to welcome these newcomers and prepare them to educate "our kids", cutting against the universalist ethic of most charter schools. While recognizing the polarizations of education reform, she remained committed to forge new relationships and possibilities. As an anthropological project, this research is uniquely capable of charting how education stakeholders are negotiating work, accountability, and difference in New Orleans charter schools, helping to move the terms of the debate over charters past the scorekeeping of ossified oppositions and articulate the new relations emerging through charter schools. By redefining the stakes and contours of this conflict, by refusing to take received categories for granted, and by showing how seemingly dominant projects are full of doubts, insecurities, and contradictions, anthropology can open new possibilities for collaboration and communication.

There is no shortage of local and national debate on the merits and consequences of the proliferation of charter schools, particularly in urban districts in the United States. New Orleans

has seen the most dramatic turn to charter schools as a means of redefining the school as a socioeconomic institution and teaching as a form of labor, but the spread of private management of public schools is a national and international matter. The media and academy are saturated with debates over charters as emblematic of the decline of the civic virtues of the public school and a tool of wealthy oligarchs (Ravitch 2010), as the key to national security (Klein and Rice 2012), as a piece of a plot to take back New Orleans from black control (Lee 2010), or as necessary to do away with the malfeasance of teachers unions (Guggenheim 2010). Charters in New Orleans are posed as a potential model for solving the problem of education inequality for the nation and also a key touchstone in reflections on the state of black politics after Hurricane Katrina (Ralph 2009). For many in the public, the stakes are high and they are clear, in no small part due to the way that discussions of combatting racial and class inequality in the US have come to focus ever more myopically on schools as the sole institution responsible for or capable of making a difference. New Orleans charters are the site of a battle between the public and the private, white educators and black families, rich and poor, adult interests and child interests, and many more. While these antagonisms are real, contingent, as well as distorted, my engagement with educators, entrepreneurs, and education non-profits in New Orleans suggests that it is necessary to take a step back from reified polarizations and show how the actual lived relations between teachers and students, administrators, families and other stakeholders demonstrate that the terms of the charter school debate are shifting under the feet of its most ardent belligerents.

Ethnographic and Historical Background

Rebirth of a Nation

Great floods, like the deluge that overwhelmed the city of New Orleans after the levees broke in 2005, are mythically charged events. They are moments of horrific destruction, of death and mourning. Yet they form the foundation for promises and agendas of rebirth, renewal, and regeneration. The waters which swept through New Orleans wreaked material devastation upon the infrastructure and constituencies of the city's public schools, but they also set the stage for a remaking of its institutions, spaces, and populations. While recognizing the painful catalyst of nature, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan nevertheless once claimed that "The best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina. That education system was a disaster. And it took Hurricane Katrina to wake up the community to say that we have to do better. And the progress that it made in four years since the hurricane, is unbelievable" (Bruce 2010). This statement is a liberal version of "disaster capitalism". This is no small point, as charter schools are one of the few domains of public policy in the United States in which you can find support and collaboration from both liberal technocrats and conservatives. Duncan poses here that New Orleans schools were a long term disaster that only an acute crisis was able to interrupt while also obscuring decades of agitation for improved public schooling by New Orleans residents before Katrina.

In this story, decades of deindustrialization, white flight, and urban disinvestment weren't the problem with public schools, but malaise on the part of the implicitly black "community". Before the impact of Hurricane Katrina New Orleans Public Schools were regarded by many as some of the worst in the United States, both by quantitative performance indicators and by qualitative descriptions of the corruption and ineffectiveness of the system, emblematic of many

segregated "inner city" or "urban" school districts.[9] In the aftermath of the storm and levee failures the state of Louisiana used an emergency powers law, Act 35, to take over failing schools in Orleans Parish. While the storm and levee failures physically destroyed many schools, the state run Recovery School District shut down the vast majority of schools as administrative entities and used the physical infrastructure and public resources commandeered to reopen them as charter schools; publically funded but typically non-unionized schools run by a range of groups including non-profit and for profit charter management organizations such as KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) and, much less often, smaller community organizations. By 2014, every single school under the oversight of the Recovery School District had been turned over to a privately managed provider. This profound transformation of the school system has left New Orleans with the highest proportion of charter schools in the country by far and has marked it as a focal point of national conflicts over the politics of education reform and privatization.

In January 2006, in the process of executing Act 35 the state government and the Recovery School District sent letters of termination to all school employees. In the reorganization of the school system overseen by the RSD terminated employees were not given preferential status for rehiring as is typical for unionized teachers in many urban school districts. Technically all the schools under the RSD were considered new institutional entities and RSD schools were not considered to be party to the collective bargaining agreement between the OPSB and the United Teachers of New Orleans AFT Local 527. According to an UTNO report, only 46% of the dismissed teachers returned to NOPS by August 2006, and my interviews with

[9] According to a state measured School Performance Score, 63 percent of public schools in New Orleans were deemed Academically Unacceptable (AUS) at the end of the 2004-2005 school year. SPS is a composite score based on student academic performance, attendance, dropout rates, and the graduation index. Additionally, the "The OPSB (Orleans Parish School Board) and the district central office continued to be considered ineffective and corrupt, so much so that in 2004 a special FBI task force was assigned to investigate the school system and 11 district employees were indicted." (Vaughn 2012)

union members indicate that attrition and retirement rates were high in the following years (United Teachers of New Orleans 2007). In the meantime, Teach for America and other alternative certification organizations were relied upon to bring in the "talent" desired by charter management operators (CMO's). Before Act 35, New Orleans Public school teachers were overwhelmingly African American women. During my field research in 2013-14, more than half of the teachers at charter schools were Teach for America corps members or alumni. Initially, only a minority of each new corps year was composed of people of color, marking a radical shift in personnel demographics as well as a literal substitution of bodies. (However, Teach for America began recruiting more heavily from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and has increased the diversity of their teachers substantially.) Charter schools have been reluctant to hire veteran teachers due to their higher costs and expectations of employee management relations, preferring younger teachers willing to adhere to different structures of accountability and submit themselves to new forms of labor discipline and organization.

These changes in the organizational form and personnel of public schools are consequential for students and families in New Orleans, but also are a site of the rearticulation of the city to the United States at large. Hurricane Katrina, as spectacle and crisis, refocused national attention on the city of New Orleans which has changed the flow of structures and identities between local and national in important ways. New Orleans has been explicitly constituted as an experimental space after the storm, whether as a "laboratory for neoliberalism" (Klein 2007, Giroux 2006, Saltman 2007), a terra nullius for white visions of retaking the city (Lipsitz 2006, Goldberg 2006), or as a field of progress and a national model for education reform by proponents of charter schools. Since Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has become a home-base for dozens of newly established and relocated activist, philanthropic, and civil society

organizations with a vast array of agendas and ideologies (Flaherty 2010). There is a long history of schools and districts becoming the new model for "what works" in education, with Chicago, New York, New Orleans, Detroit, and Philadelphia occupying this role in the past fifteen years alone. However, New Orleans is unique in the scale and degree to which its educational institutions have been totally remade in an experimental mode. This laboratory metaphor has a long history in postcolonial theory, with colonies posited as "laboratories of modernity" (Mitchell 1988, Rabinow 1989) or the plantation as a laboratory for capitalism (Mintz 1959). Rather than pose New Orleans as a colony as an objective structure, we should follow Ann Stoler (2015) in thinking of coloniality as a set of design social and political relations. Thus the laboratory metaphor indexes the degree to which social experiments are never pure, but have a tendency to occur in spaces of attenuated sovereignty, like Post-Katrina New Orleans.

The Infinite Frontier

At first glance, New Orleans may seem an odd place to make claims about race and difference on a national level. The city is often characterized as culturally exceptional within the United States. Racial, class, and gendered difference have been encoded in the city (and state) through particular policies, laws, and lawsuits which have drawn and constantly reinvented strict boundaries between white, black, and creole and declared white ownership of property more sacred than black kinship (Dominguez 1986). The city also has a unique spatialization of difference within the United States. Until the late 20th century, in New Orleans, unlike Chicago, racial groups had not lived within homogenous and separate residential homelands, but within "superblocks" (Lewis 2003) in which grand wealthy boulevards owned by white residents contained an inner core of middle and working class housing which were often occupied by African-Americans (though the city has become more segregated along "traditional lines" over

the past few decades and particularly after Katrina). Thus, racial difference has taken on a peculiar intimacy in New Orleans, whereby even seemingly innocuous cultural practices such as the parades of Mardi-Gras Indians lay a claim to space and cause frictions which spark police brutality and community reckoning (Lipsitz 1988). Nevertheless, there is precedent for looking to New Orleans to work out national issues of race and difference, from the movements which brought Homer Plessy to challenge segregation to the beginning of its transformation (though not destruction) by the likes of Ruby Bridges, the first black child to integrate an all-white elementary school in the Southern United States. We can again see New Orleans as a racial problem space in the contemporary reconfigurations of its school system through the charter schools experiment.

Education and public schools have been some of the primary fields of contestation over the constitution and maintenance of racial difference and inequality in the United States, from the controversial idea of literacy among the enslaved, to the fight for equal resources for segregated public schools, to efforts to use busing to integrate schools in the face of residential segregation. Racial segregation has been a flashpoint for the entire existence of public schools, and while it was formally abolished by the Supreme Court in 1954, public schools remain racially segregated in the present day.[10] In Civil Rights era New Orleans, the struggle to integrate schools united black communities and not only created novel political alliances between black, creole, and white city residents, but served as a catalyst for flattening notions of racial difference between black and creole communities as well as creating a new geography of race in the city through the withdrawal of whites to the suburbs (Lassiter 2006). Mere weeks before the 1954

[10] Over decades of organizing, federal intervention, and white counter-revolution (against busing and suburban-urban district unification) the forms and terms of segregation have changed, but nearly the same percentages of students attend racially isolated schools now as during the time of Jim Crow segregation.

Brown v. Board of Education decision which declared segregation unconstitutional, a boycott of an annual parade in celebration of the philanthropic contributions of John McDonough to New Orleans public schools served to unite black and creole communities and spurred further political organization (Hirsch 1992). Many whites believed that the school system was their "property", anticipating the language of the tax revolt and taxpayer citizenship. After a judge outlined a process for the desegregation of New Orleans schools in 1960 and the school board received survey results indicating majority support for integration, the school board president decided to disregard the survey because most of the parents voting for integration were black and "whites are the people who support the system" (Vaughn 2012).

The fight for school integration didn't just shift racial frontiers and meanings however, it also created a new black politics with shared characteristics with other majority black cities across the nation. The "Black Urban Regime" (Reed 1999) of black mayors, civil servants, and political and community groups that arose from the forms of organization catalyzed by school politics represented a level of black participation in municipal governance across the United States unseen since the Reconstruction Era. Black politicians and community organizations were empowered to combat inequality through the formation of "the soft state" (Germany 2010) in the wake of President Johnson's Great Society agenda. Black teachers and their unions, who made up an increasing proportion of the system, were key factors in enabling and executing this agenda (Fairclough 2007). Thus, schools and teaching have been key sites for not only the articulation of racial frontiers, but the constitution of racialized political formations. The shift to charter schools in New Orleans thus represents not an innocuous change in institutional form, but a massive shift in racial politics and frontiers, with undetermined consequences. Whereas previous waves of education reform engaged schools as community and collective institutions,

charter school based reforms see individualized parents exercising choice as the key political mechanism for the functioning of school systems. Reformers often use the phrase "voting with their feet" to describe parent's political agency in a charter system no longer subject to the oversight of an elected school board,[11] meaning that if schools are not adequate, parents will choose to leave them. Foucault theorized that neoliberalism contained an epistemological politics, that government could not know economy (Foucault 2004). Rather than carry an outright hostility to black controlled collective and communal educational institutions like school boards and teachers unions, education reformers also pose that these groups are epistemologically deficient compared to atomized family units exercising "choice".

While class has been characterized as an ambiguous and elusive feature of American life, public schools have been central to efforts to promote class mobility, shape class identity, and prepare students for economic life (Foley 1984, Lipman 2011). Wilson (1987) contended that class became the primary factor in the perpetuation of inequality and stratification among poor African Americans and that racial explanation of inequality had become insufficient. Wilson used the term "underclass" to describe the spatially isolated and economically marginalized black urban population which has comprised the vast majority of public school students in places like New Orleans. Many have challenged the gendered and behavioral premises of Wilson's argument (Reed 1999, Cohen 2004), but the characterization/slippage of racial inequality as a class problem and its solution as a matter of economic preparation remains pervasive in American politics in general and education reform discourse in particular. For mainstream political actors, the key to solving the ambiguous relationship between racial inequality and class

[11] In 2016, the state legislature voted to return all of the remaining schools under RSD control to the OPSB by 2018. However, the school board is controlled by a majority of members supporting charter based reform and this measure stipulates that charter schools will retain the same autonomy they had under the RSD. It remains to be seen how "local control" has been transformed by over a decade of reform.

inequality, more often called “poverty”, is greater preparation of children through public schooling (Apple 2012). This has often been figured as a solution to the primary “crisis” of black male unemployment in the face of de-industrialization. However, Sugrue (2013) has urged us to recognize that at the same time work “disappeared” for black men, there was a concomitant expansion in public sector employment for black women, an expansion now under threat from privatization and neoliberalism.

This re-gendering of the postwar history of labor in black communities refocuses our attention on the co-productions of difference at play in the experiment of charter schooling. The service sector currently composes approximately eighty percent of jobs in the American economy, and black women have taken on greater burdens of earning household income in deindustrialized urban centers. A 2014 report on the New Orleans’ teacher pipelines stated the consequences of a changing educator workforce given these larger labor trends, “The dismissal of 8,500 OPSB employees had a large impact on the city’s black middle class. In 2004–05, 71 percent of teachers in New Orleans were African American. By 2014, this figured had dropped to 49 percent. This drop is equivalent to about 4 percent of the entire African American working age population” (Harris et al 2015) When people say that teachers were the “backbone of the black middle class” they index the reliance of New Orleans black communities on public sector employment, particularly in education. The black middle class population has recovered from pre Katrina levels much more slowly than those with lower incomes (Casselman 2015) in no small part due to diminished opportunities in the charter school sector compared to traditional public schools.

Charter schools, which have city-wide enrollment pools unlike the neighborhood allotments of the previous system have re-territorialized the school as a site of this boundary

making and marking. Some have characterized this as part of a class conquest of cities, using schools as a lure for middle and upper class families (Lipman 2011) and connected schooling to gentrification at large (Smith 1996, Flaherty 2010). New Orleans natives often joke that one of the unique qualities of their city is that when people ask "what school you went to" they mean high school, indexing the important local overlaps between school, place, and identity. Takeovers of neighborhood schools, such as the conversion of Frederick Douglass High School to the city-wide enrollment KIPP Renaissance High School in 2010, have sparked fierce conflicts over the nature of the connection between school and community. The school-neighborhood-class-race nexus has been undone and remade after Katrina, and the emergent communities created in and through charter schools are opportunities to elucidate just how it is that schools do the work of making race and class real. The failures of public schools in New Orleans before Katrina (and nationally) are often constructed in terms of the management of black masculinity, of the improper raising of black boys, purported to result in unemployment and murderous violence (Noguera 2008), evoking discourses of deviance seen in the theories of maladaptive black family structures in the Moynihan Report of 1965. Thus the focus of charter schools on parent responsibility and teacher accountability are also a site for the reconfiguration of the relationship between school and family, which in New Orleans and similar urban school districts is always-already inextricably tied to race and class. While new charter school teachers and education professionals very clearly disturb and remake racial and class boundaries in the city, both by virtue of their identities and lack of ties to community institutions, they are also absorbed into family and community entanglements which are fundamental to understanding the agendas of charter school reform.

Remixing the Social Contract

One of the central ideological objects of charter school reforms is the notion of accountability, in the form of using testing metrics and other forms of evaluation to close down "failing schools" and incentivize higher performance and year to year improvement among schools just above that tier. Originally, charter schools were an idea put forth by progressive reformers from teachers unions as a way to make smaller community run schools that would ostensibly be more responsive to community concerns and needs as well as subject to greater collective control by teachers (Spring 2011). However, more conservative political actors found the idea of charters appealing as well and began to promote them as a way of making public schools more accountable to a different constituency, taxpayers. By getting rid of the mediation of teachers unions and state bureaucracies, charter schools are purported to offer choice to both teachers and families as means to hold each other accountable for educating children. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (2001), American schools have been subject to increasingly quantitative and punitive audit regimes.[12] The information produced by these audit regimes serves as the epistemological foundation for empowering parents as "stakeholders", rather than community members or citizens to make decisions about public schools. Accountability then becomes a new rubric for judging the fulfillment of ideals of equality and freedom promised by universal public education.

Charter school teachers and other education professionals are new faces in a changing negotiation of rights and responsibilities between populations and institutions in the United States, from a vision of schools as social and civic institutions to credentialing apparatuses which confer skills upon atomized individuals. The public school system in the city has been depicted as a nightmarish failure before Katrina, a picture which has been vigorously contested (Buras et

[12] Following Wacquant (2009), these are neither unlike nor unconnected to Clinton's 1996 welfare reform.

al 2010, Dixson 2011), but nevertheless figures the institutional forms which emerged from decades of civil rights activism and the growth of the welfare state as abject and unaccountable fiascoes. The United Teachers of New Orleans and the publicly elected Orleans Parish School Board were blamed for New Orleans schools having some of the worst test scores in the nation and for an inability to tame violence on school grounds. Indictments of OPSB members in 2004 for bribery and financial improprieties further painted the public schools as unaccountable and corrupt. The state government theorized that contracting the management of local schools to private management companies would create a more accountable system of schools (Vaughn 2012). Urban public schools across the nation were subject to discourses of crisis for decades before Katrina, hence the ease with which Arne Duncan called New Orleans schools in particular a "disaster", this label being applied to the governance of schools, not the broader conditions of racial segregation and urban disinvestment affecting the public school population.

Charter schools have also been figured as the means by which private forces are taking away vital functions from public accountability and governance by taking school oversight away from locally elected school boards and putting them in the hands of self-appointed boards of charter management organizations, typically composed of elites. While proponents of charters emphasize that they are still subject to public rules and regulations as well as funding, this characterization of the public and private in the charter school debate obscures the ways in which schooling itself has long been a site of the construction of public/private distinctions and the private dimensions of "traditional" public schools. In the decades following official desegregation of public schools, the private sphere was used as a tactic to avoid integration and re-establish white control of the distribution of racial and class frontiers. Whites shut down or fled public school districts and created or attended private schools rather than integrate, fiercely

resisted and defeated attempts to use busing to overcome geographical barriers, and across the country reconfigured tax codes to tie school funding to property taxes. The private power of white wealth and property became the means of controlling public schools to maintain raced and classed privilege (Lipsitz 2006). New Orleans in particular saw white citizens flee its public schools by moving to suburban municipalities and sending their children to private school. By the time of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was 68% African-American, with a public school population that was 94% African-American, and a city wide enrollment of school age children in private schools of 30%, second only to the much wealthier city of San Francisco, meaning that white children have effectively been provided with a separate private school system. Earl Warren and the Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," claiming segregation to be alien to fundamental constitutional values. However, as Pedro Noguera (2016) has noted, courts have consistently dismantled the tools governments have used to disrupt and ameliorate school segregation rooted in property relations. Furthermore, the state itself has been imagined as a kind of property of white taxpayers in New Orleans, with the provisions of the welfare state figured as gifts and appropriations from whites who are the true "owners" of the state.

Laboring and Learning

Teaching in public schools was a male dominated profession until the late 19th and early 20th century. However, as many districts greatly expanded the scale and scope of their public schools, they preferred to hire women as cheaper and ostensibly more docile and controllable laborers. Progressive theories of scientific management posed that schools could be organized more like businesses and teachers treated more like factory workers subject to standardized routines and forms of accountability. All over the country teachers organized into unions to

protect themselves and gain control over their work lives. In New Orleans, the white National Education Association (NEA) and black American Federation of Teachers (AFT) teachers' unions joined together to form the first integrated teachers union in the South in 1972. The increase of Black teachers and school administrators in the following years mimicked the broader expansion of black female employment in the public sector and white collar jobs following the Great Society. Thus, when the state government fired all teachers and staff of the New Orleans schools, it profoundly changed one of the core foundations of black economic security and political leadership in the city.

We are now witness to a particular zeitgeist for transforming the basis of teaching labor and organization. In 2013, the federal Department of Education partnered with the NEA, AFT, and other education organizations to put out a call for "Transforming the Teaching Profession" (Duncan 2013). The call emphasizes that the global spatio-temporal orders of the 21st century have placed new demands on Americans, as citizens *and* workers. According to this agenda, it is necessary to elevate the teaching profession so that every student will emerge from high school "well-informed as a citizen, and ready for the workplace" (ibid), showing how the neoliberal logics of stakeholders and consumers don't erase ideas of citizenship, but subordinate them to its logics. In this document, teachers unions have been typologized as being industrial, professional, or social justice focused organizations. The constituents of the above call, including the largest teachers' unions in the country, believe that teachers are too tightly tied to an industrial model and must become more professional, with attendant changes in forms of evaluation, compensation, and accountability. Thus, even though charter schools mostly do not employ

unionized workforces[13], they participate in a larger field of the reorganization of teaching work under the sign of professionalization.

Charter schools in New Orleans have profoundly changed the nature of teaching in urban public schools. Charter school networks viewed the previous pool of teachers as under-qualified and pushed for new requirements for prospective teachers. Many of the terminated veteran teachers failed new tests and metrics established by the RSD, and the few charter schools that hired significant numbers of veteran teachers experienced high turnover as they didn't fit into models of charter school teaching. New Orleans charter schools are not required to hire unionized teachers and UTNO was unable to secure a new contract with the city in 2006. Charters now hire teachers for at-will employment (whereby they can be fired for any reason and without warning) with much greater flexibility for organizing work routines and processes. Charter schools typically pay higher salaries than traditional public schools, but demand that their teachers work longer hours and adhere to stricter scripts and supervision. Furthermore, some have experimented with merit pay. Charters have preferred to hire teachers through alternative certification organizations like Teach for America. In 2012 alone, TFA sent 375 new teachers into the district, and TFA alums were employed as school leaders at 27 schools. These developments in the recruiting, training, and retention of teachers at charter schools have profoundly altered the trajectory of teaching as a career and form of work in the city with potential for replication across the nation.

Ultimately charter school advocates believe that public school students will be best served by a "portfolio" model of district organization. They argue that this strategy, in which a school district is composed of "diverse providers" (meant in a quantitative sense) will allow

[13] Though there are increasing levels of union organizing in charter schools.

schools to move past a "one-size-fits-all" approach to education. By decentralizing control of schools to charter management organizations they hope to "empower" educators and families to have greater control over their schools as well as encourage competition between schools. While this model evokes visions of community controlled schooling, ultimately schools are still subject to the authority of test based accountability policies as well as charter school authorizers. This model is form of what Torin Monahan (2005) calls "fragmented centralization", whereby authority is ever more concentrated while responsibility is distributed amongst a broader range of individualized subjects. The dream of the portfolio model is that every family will have the choice of an "excellent" school, but these choices are to be conceived within atomized units rather than collectives.

Theoretical Conceptualization

This project is fundamentally concerned with how charter school reform's experimental transformations in teachers and education professionals as workers and schools as sites of preparation for work are reconstructing racialized difference in New Orleans and the United States write large. Willis (1981) did groundbreaking work to reconceive the school as a structural element within capitalist political economies and the ways in which white youth in the United Kingdom reproduced themselves as working class through the mediations, contestations, and compromises of working class culture. Building on Marx, Gramsci, and Althusser, he developed a critical model for reconceiving the relations between culture, ideology, education, and class. Nevertheless, Willis recognized that he did not adequately engage questions of race and gender. This research builds on Willis, as well as anthropologies and political theories of labor (Freeman 2000, Salzinger 2003, Weeks 2011), to reorient the role of work in constructing and reconstructing racialized difference through an examination of contemporary experiments in

education labor and professionalization. This move will not only attempt to reconceive relations between work and racialized difference, but also ask us to reconsider education as a form of labor itself.

In attempting to explore the ideological production of the charter school teacher in New Orleans, this project integrates three areas of anthropological research supported by other qualitative social sciences. First, this project draws on research into the construction of racialized meanings, subjectivities, and structures and their intersections and co-production with other forms of difference in the United States in order to examine how charter school reform is the site for the rearticulations of raced, classed, and gendered assemblages. Second, this research turns to theoretical and ethnographic engagements with schools as a site of political and socioeconomic reproduction in order to ground the formation of charter school teachers as a process which renegotiates elements of the American social contract including notions of accountability and the public/private distinction. Finally, this work applies methods and questions from the anthropology and sociology of work in order to investigate charter schools as a site of labor, and how labor itself serves as a foundation for transformation in assemblages of difference and the American social contract.

I build upon considerations of race and difference as fundamental structures of American life to consider how the dis- and relocations involved in the making of charter school teachers in New Orleans are reworking symbolic and material assemblages of difference. Race is a historical category formed through processes of "racialization" (Omi and Winant 1994) and an ideological structure (Fields 1990). We must focus not on its essential features but its constitution in everyday life mediated by sociopolitical institutions (De Genova 2005). Jackson (2005) shows how race is performatively realized in "sincere" and "authentic" modes. His concept of racial

sincerity is an attempt to grasp the relationality of race, of how something which is not real in a physical or biological sense becomes real through indeterminate social actions. Like others, he also demonstrates how race is necessarily co-constituted with other forms of difference such as class, gender, and sexuality (Hall 1996, Mullings 1997). Recent work also suggests that contemporary transformations in political economy may be "reterritorializing" the production of racialized meanings, subjects, and structures on a global scale (Clarke and Thomas 2006).

Teachers in New Orleans charter schools should be viewed as 21st century pioneers, inheriting and innovating an institutional role of reworking distinctions of race, class, and gender on multiple scales. The frontier persists as one of the dominant metaphors of American life. Frederick Jackson Turner (2013) argued at the end of the 19th century that the frontier as a spatial reality and utopian imagination was at the very core of national character and wondered what the closing of the frontier might mean for the future of the nation. However, Cattellino (2008, 2010) contends that the frontier as national imaginary persists, and that the process of making and unmaking of frontiers must be reckoned with in anthropologies of the United States. Tsing (2005) also points to the importance of frontiers as an organizing structure of capitalism. (Add a sentence about why this matters to New Orleans, something about urban frontiers and gentrication, Lipman 2011) Frontiers are means of imagining and materializing asymmetrical spatio-temporal fixations which are critical to the constitution of difference in the United States and schools have been one of the primary institutions where these boundaries are developed and contested.

My research also engages with social scientific and historical work on the politics of race, and black politics in particular with a focus on urban governance and black engagement with the public sector. New Orleans is one of a few major metropolitan areas in the United States in

which a majority black population was able to realize institutional political power through government and civil society after the Civil Rights Movement and the election of Ernest "Dutch" Morial to the mayor's office in 1978 (Hirsch and Logsdon 1992, Germany 2007). During the fight for school desegregation, black teachers themselves served as the foundation of for further black political organization in New Orleans (Fairclough 2007). However, the promises of racial justice and equality through black governance were seen to have disappointed if not outright failed by the turn of the 21st century after decades of urban disinvestment and neglect (Reed 1999, Thompson 2005). The devastation and reforms following Hurricane Katrina served as a point of reflection, with some decrying the relative weakness of black "counterpublics" (Dawson 2006), noting the millenarian desires of using the flood as a new beginning for black politics (Ralph 2006), and warning of white revanchism (Lipsitz 2006). New Orleans was widely viewed as an experimental space after Katrina, with some eager to use the disruptions of the storms to rebuild the school system and public housing, while others cautioned that experimentation would subject the city to the ideological desires of neoliberalism, education privatization, and re-establishment of white governance (Giroux 2006, Klein 2008, Saltman 2007).

Compared to other social sciences in the late 20th and early 21st century, anthropology has been relatively inattentive to race (Mullings 2005) and even less so towards black politics, despite standout work from select anthropologists (Allen and Jobson 2016, Harrison 1992). While anthropologists like Franz Boas and St. Clair Drake led the discipline in a publically anti-racist direction in the early and mid-twentieth century (Baker 2010), in the decades since anthropology's stature as a public voice against racism has waned compared to disciplines like sociology, economics, and history. In part this is due to anthropology's relative lack of attention to fieldwork in the United States, except for indigenous North America, until the past twenty

years. This is a missed opportunity, for as Mullings argues, anthropologists have key analytical tools for unpacking race and racism. Thus, I plan to build on the interdisciplinary scholarship race politics in the United States to produce an account of charter school teachers and other education professionals as political subjects whose constitution and actions are remaking the politics of race and black politics in New Orleans and the United States.

Wilson's "underclass" thesis was an important intervention into debates on the relationship between race and class in late 20th century American urban life, as he elucidated the ways that deindustrialization in American cities contributed to the reproduction of systemic poverty among African Americans, but it is its fundamental gender and sexual politics which Cohen (2004) claims are its biggest weakness. Sugrue (2013) has suggested that Wilson's framing of the urban crisis is myopically centered on the problem of black male labor and the disappearance of industrial work, ignoring the concomitant expansion of black female employment in the public sector over the same period. For Wilson, the origins of class and racial inequality are tied to hetero-normative and patriarchal notions of family structure and Wilson's policy solutions are meant to compensate for and fix deviant family units.[14] The reform of the US welfare state arising out of this notion of family deviance exemplified by the 1996 "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act" made the repsonsibilization and punitive regulation of black women as single heads of household a privileged target (Hancock

[14] The 1965 report "The Negro Family: The Case For National Action" by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan influenced generations of liberal and conservative interventions into black urban poverty by focusing remediation efforts on the deviant family structures of African Americans. Moynihan argued that without access to secure employment, black men would become alienated from their roles as husbands and fathers, leading to the proliferation of single parent female headed households. The next year, anthropologist Oscar Lewis released a book which popularized the "culture of poverty" idea, which claimed that poor families responded to poverty with maladaptive behaviors and values which further entrenched and reproduced poverty inter-generationally. These behaviorist and culturalist explanations of race and class inequality underpin many of the logics of education reform, including the central idea that poor students of color need to be improved to fix inequality, rather than tackling inequality as a political and economic problem separate from merits and qualifications.

2004, Wacquant 2009). As one of the primary levers of regulating inequality, public schools in the United States have always had a complex relationship with families and parents, variably sharing with and taking over duties from the family unit (Spring 2011). Teaching itself has been configured as a form of feminized labor (Apple 1986) and in New Orleans before Katrina, the overwhelmingly African American female teaching force occupied a position of being both a corrective for the deviance of low-income female headed households and being subject to the same kinds of stereotyping, demonization, and critique.

This manuscript seeks to shift the literature on charter schools and neoliberalism away from conceptions of neoliberalism as a prepackaged set of elite ideology descending upon localities by ethnographically charting how fundamental features of neoliberalism such as privatization and the market as economic and political model are ideologically constructed through the everyday development and labor of education professionals. Charter schools are relatively new transformations in the organization and structure of schooling and are reconfiguring the American social contract on several levels by arguing that management models from the corporate sector are more appropriate for the "professional" work of teaching than union bureaucracy. The ideals of school choice and accountability that emerge from the spread of charter schools in the early 21st century provide new forms for the notions of freedom and equality that have been associated with public schools (Lipman 2011). Charters have been characterized by opponents and boosters alike as a "market-based" or "neoliberal" reform of public schools (Giroux 2011), as invasion of the public by the private and the state by the market. However, public/private does not map on to state/non-state. The state itself is the very condition for the public/private distinction as an exclusionary politico-legal categorization. Rather than view these oppositions as essential and charter schools as an imposition or a

boundary mover, we should see distinctions such as public/private as ideological constructions themselves which take contingent, overlapping, and contradictory form in particular situations (Gal 2002). Accountability, market models, and choice are all normative projects (Brown 2003) and "migrating keywords" (Shore and Wright 2000) which take specific form that can be elucidated by ethnographic engagement with teachers in charter schools. Thus, charters are not the emergence of the privatization of public schools, but a particular phase in the re-negotiation of distinctions like the public and private in and through schooling.

While accounts of schools as institutions of socioeconomic reproduction have focused our attention on how schools shape students, I plan to turn their analytic insights onto how education reform reconfigure teachers and educators as subjects and structuring forces. Schools in general have been characterized as the primary ideological institution in capitalist societies (Althusser 1994), whether this ideological inculcation is towards a democratic citizenship (Dewey 1966) or towards reproducing raced, classed, and gendered identities and domination (Apple 1986, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Bourdieu 1977, Foley 1994). Willis (1981) has demonstrated how this preparation and insertion of students into political economic structures is not a mere imposition of abstract forces, but is a compromise co-produced through the efforts of school teachers and administration along with the culture resistance and mediation provided by his working class students subjects. Rosa (2010) has done analogous work demonstrating how racial identity is not imposed or brought into schools, but is semiotically constructed on site. By critically apprehending the formation of teachers, this project will fragment the student/institution binary and create a more multifaceted picture of the reproductive features of schooling in the United States.

Finally, attending to the teacher as a worker can open up new understandings of transformations in American identity and social structure as teaching in charter schools moves from unionized bureaucracy to affective entrepreneurialism. Anthropologists and sociologists have long been engaged in ethnographic accounts of industrial labor and organization (Burawoy 1979) and these along with accounts of service labor in the US can critically inform an engagement with teachers as workers in a capitalist society. While there have been many accounts of reforms and contestation over teaching labor and organization (Apple 1986, Fairclough 2007), thinking of teaching as a form of labor akin to others is critical for thinking through the changes to teaching in charter schools. Ethnographic work has demonstrated how workers as subjects are made, not discovered, in a process mediated by race, class, and gender (Freeman 2000, Salzinger 2003) as well as how in service work routines and scripts (Leidner 2003) and the fetishization of hard work and flexibility structure the labor process and laboring subjects (Ho 2009). Urciuoli (2008) has argued that under neoliberalism we are seeing particular transformations in labor as a culturally and semiotically constructed form, including a reinterpretation of the concept of skill itself and a shift in emphasis from experience to expertise. Furthermore, the boundaries between life and work are being blurred as life becomes more like work under "emotional labor regimes" (Freeman 2014, Weeks 2011). I draw on these ethnographic accounts of labor to ask how it is that in the making of charter school teachers we can also see contingent reconfigurations of routines, work ethic, and accountability and how these "strategically deployed shifters" (ibid) are prepared for "scalability" (Tsing 2012) and replication as a model for educational best practices. There is a strong overlap between notions of the American as a national subject and as a worker, though the definitions and circumstances of work change through time, from farmer and independent business man, to manufacturing

worker, to entrepreneur (Schneider 1968). Attending to the education reform as a site of labor can open up possibilities for new understandings of transformations in American identity and social structure.

This manuscript offers a path towards novel articulations of education, labor, liberal values, and difference in anthropological theory. Schooling, work, the American social contract, and race have been connected as fundamental features of American life and human socialization, but too often as essentialized components which are linked together as objective structures. By exploring the constitution of the education work as an ideological fantasy (Zizek 1994) my research will elucidate both the contingent formation of these elements and their suturing into durable and mobile social forms. The challenge of anthropology is to refuse to describe entities like schools, communities, movements, and race as artificially bounded and synchronic forms, but to theorize their formation, transformation, and persistence as they shift in concert with political and institutional transformations.

Teachers at New Orleans charter schools and education reformers are disrupting frontiers, having been characterized both as anti-racist and racist, as providing class mobility and as agents of capitalist hegemons, as making up for the deficiencies of low-income black parents and as patronizing and demonizing those same families. Race and difference are not ontological priors, but ideological embarkation points for observation and analysis. Theories of the mutual imbrication of race, difference, and political economy have posited these relations in terms of hierarchies or the interlocking of essential elements (Hall 1996) or the role of economic relations in laying the foundation for categories of difference (Fields 1990). Jackson's work (2005) on "racial sincerity" has ably demonstrated the performative realizations of race and difference through practices of consumption, cultural production, and self-fashioning. This project advances

this discussion by treating education work as an emergent form of labor and asking how it is through work as a cultural and indeterminate process that difference is sutured and circulated in charter school reform. In so doing, it asks us to consider how interventionist expertise is not merely a site of engagement with racialized inequality, but a generator of racecraft in and of itself.

Ball (2011) has argued that the proliferation of private management in schooling is too often apprehended as an abstract force that descends upon localities from unfixable cosmopolitan networks. Marcus and Fisher (1986) have pointed to Willis (1981) as an exemplar of the difficulty of producing an interpretation of social structures which also provides a nuanced account of specific cultural processes. This project takes up this challenge by helping to move debates over charter schools away from judgments upon their relationship to totalizing conflicts of neoliberalism to show how through an emergent form of labor, distinctions of public/private, freedom/equality, and state/market are performatively constituted and reiterated.

Methods and Sites

I make the formation of education reform as a form of racialized labor intelligible by tracking three dynamics: 1) the "human capital" practices and workplace cultures of charter schools themselves, 2) the development of new roles for brokering racialized expertise in education non-profits, and 3) the turn of education entrepreneurs towards "design thinking" as a means of incorporating racialized expertise into new economies of data and intelligence gathering. This research is grounded in sixteen months of participant observation and interviews at six charter schools in New Orleans as well as several educational non-profits, community organizations, education start-ups and incubators, and education policy think tanks. The main

fieldwork was conducted while living full time in New Orleans for thirteen months from 2013-2014, but I also conducted preliminary interviews and observations in the summer of 2011. Having taught at a charter school in New York City for two years as a Teach for America corps member, I was intimately familiar with the organizational structures and embodied practices of these institutions. Charter schools claim to create a competitive environment in which schools develop and share best practices, taking many different forms from test prep curricula and discipline systems to ideas for branding "school culture", making a comparative perspective useful. These distinct sites allowed me to explore the different approaches to education work that emerged from varying institutional scales and forms.

Research Sites:

This research was primarily conducted at two different No Excuses style charter schools in two different charter school networks in New Orleans during the 2013-14 school year, as well as several other No Excuses charter schools, education non-profits, and education businesses. In the following chapters, I do not present each school as a discrete entity, as the goal of this research was not to characterize charter schools as bounded work places, but to investigate work in charter schools as a site of racialization and subject formation. I'll briefly characterize the schools I observed, in order to highlight their key differences.

The first school is a K-8 charter school that is part of a network that manages between four and six schools. I spent all my time in this school with the middle school grades, sitting in on classes, shadowing teachers and the principal for a whole work day, observing teacher interviews and sample lessons, and attending professional development sessions. This school network liked to emphasize having more local roots than others and had a slightly more diverse

teaching staff than other No Excuses schools. The second school was also a K-8 charter school, located in a different part of the city and part of a smaller charter school network. I spent most of my time in this school with one grade team in particular, though I did observe and shadow teachers at every grade level as well as administrators. This school experienced a leadership transition during the school year and was facing decreasing test scores after being highlighted for years as one of the top examples of New Orleans charter schools.

I also made targeted visits throughout the school year to several other charter schools to observe specific features. A school in a different network from the first two was reputed to have an "intense" or "exemplary" staff culture, an extreme version of a No Excuses ethic, and I visited them one day to see their morning staff meeting. At an arts focused school in another network, I observed teachers over several meetings as they organized an ad-hoc leadership council to attempt to have a collective voice in the running of the school. I visited Jay, an education entrepreneur and teacher, several times at a school in yet another network. Hayden, the human capital manager at the network of the first school, encouraged me to observe the school leadership meetings at another school in their network and I did so a couple times. Finally, I shadowed substitute teachers employed through the company that is the focus of chapter 5 at several different charter schools.

Various non-profits and education businesses were also key sites. At a non-profit I call Reform Corps, I interviewed and shadowed a community liaison and teacher coach as examples of the brokering of racialized expertise. I interviewed and shadowed the New Orleans director for an organization I call the Organization for Black Choice. I also attended several of their public events and their annual national conference, held that year in New Orleans. Most of the material for chapters 4 and 5 was gathered while conducting observations at an organization I

call Incubator, which develops programming and support for budding education entrepreneurs. I interviewed and observed members of summer long cohort of entrepreneurs in training as they trained and competed for funding for their businesses and school models, the core of chapter 4. I also spent most of the school year shadowing and interviewing the management and teachers at a company started through Incubator that I call ConnectED, which provides substitute teachers for charter schools.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1, "There's No Such Thing as a Bad Teacher: Race and Talent in Post-Katrina Charter Schools," reframes discourses on teacher quality as devices of social atomization and racialization by focusing on the complementary narratives of the "bad teacher" and the "talent" circulating in reflections on education reform in New Orleans. On the eve of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans Public School teachers presided over a school system subjected to decades of "aggressive neglect" (Ladson Billings 2006) and disinvestment. This chapter examines how dystopic memorialization of "how the schools were before Katrina" came to justify the drastic step of firing all the teachers in the ninety percent of public schools taken over by state government in late 2005 and the characterization of these educators as "bad teachers", an icon of not only ineffective pedagogy, but also the public sector as a failed project. Black teachers had been characterized by many informants as "the backbone of the black middle class", but teacher quality discourse framed them as insufficiently talented and professional for the new model of charter schools.

The chapter also discusses how charter school networks valorize a new class of teachers as "talent" and human capital. Teachers in charters schools after Katrina are disproportionately

young, white, not from New Orleans, and recruited through alternative certification organizations like Teach for America rather than traditional schools of education. These new teachers are recruited and praised for their "mindsets" and "culture fit", whereby their concrete skills as a pedagogue are not valued so much as their flexibility in adapting the situational working cultures of particular charter schools. Ultimately, these paired discourse of teacher quality, both positive and negative, are means to re-racializing teachers as kinds of subjects, from a black leadership class, to a deracinated, individualized, and flexible workforce.

Chapter 2 claims that charter schools' commitment to work itself as a form of hyper-professionalization is the grounds for creating structures of racialized exclusion in the composition of their teaching workforce in the form of racialized regimes of affective labor. Teachers in charter schools are often characterized as working longer hours with greater intensity than teachers in traditional public schools, implying that educators excluded from the system either do not desire to or cannot meet objective standards of work. However, following Marx, this chapter argues that the working day is not an objective measure of time and energy, but a terrain of political struggle whereby the working day in charter schools is a limitless horizon and teachers do not question the imperative to work harder and longer, but only how to cope. This drive towards extending the working day incentivizes school networks to hire youthful teachers without the kinds of familial and social connections that might impose limits on their working capacities.

This chapter follows anthropologies of work in posing that workers subjectivities are not only brought into the workplace, they are made at the point of production. Charter schools embrace a vision of professionalism that is based not in the terms of rights, expertise, and social justice that teachers unions have developed, but in terms of flexibility, adaptability, and

mindsets. At the same time as charter school teachers are subjected to forces of scalability and standardization, this hollowed out subject of professionalism is asked to take on greater affective burdens as part of their work through school leadership's focus on positivity and collaboration. These commitments to work and professionalism create a situation in which school leaders desire greater teacher diversity, but also create a work environment and a subject of teaching work that conforms to racialized conceptions of fit, including elite college affiliations and expectations that teachers put working hours above other kinds of familial or community commitments.

Chapter 3 turns towards education non-profits and contends that the move from a central public district to a constellation of charter management organizations, foundations, and non-profits has led to the development of new techniques of translation and arbitrage by black non-profit employees as they broker relationships between communities, schools, private interests, and the government. While the first few years of reform after Hurricane Katrina severely disrupted racialized networks of power and patronage in favor of mostly white transplants, many black educators and policymakers have stepped into the void as brokers in the years since, developing forms of racialized expertise which translate and articulate emergent community interests to reform agendas. Education reform in New Orleans has been criticized as a project of white outsiders and this chapter shows how black and indigenous actors are maneuvering within reform oriented organizations to accomplish autonomous political ends. Where charter schools were once race-blind, sophisticated forms of racialized expertise are becoming increasingly essential to their enduring presence.

The chapter follows several black professionals who work with reform oriented organizations and investigates how they use their liminal positionality to shift the racial

sensibilities of white reformers as well as connect community organizations and bases of power to reformers. Often this entails humbling white reformers by placing them in contact with elders and authorities within black communities that were not consulted or considered during the initial expansion of charter schools in the city. One organization in particular reframes charter school expansion from a universalist liberal project to a more black nationalist agenda. This chapter contends that schools in the United States function as a kind of racialized infrastructure and that the initial wave of reformers did not consider how their total remaking of the school system might disrupt patterns of racialized political authority. These racial brokers are attempting to articulate charter school reform to heterogeneous black and community agendas.

The last two chapters are concerned with the development of a scene of education entrepreneurs based out of an organization I call Incubator. Chapter 4, anchored in the story of Incubator's genesis and attempt to hold a yearlong contest to reimagine the "future of school," asserts that a Silicon Valley-derived method called "design thinking" is being used to respond to racial cleavages through the development of forms of ethnographically inflected racial intelligence gathering. After nearly a decade, transplants involved in education reform face new challenges posed by the increased duration of their stay. This chapter examines how pitch nights and new ventures by education entrepreneurs work through design thinking and speculative rituals that alter the temporality of reform from crisis-laden immediacy to the production of enduring futures. These visions are more than technical fixes; they are racial assemblages which allow reformers to stake new claims of belonging in the city and incorporate racial expertise into a novel information economy.

These entrepreneurs are critical of the managerial cultures of No Excuses charter schools and argue that schools must embrace innovation to be successful. The first section looks at

narratives of the genesis of Incubator. I discuss how empathy serves as both a motivation for starting Incubator as well as principal of design. The second part draws from pitches by the founder and participants in the program to demonstrate their theory of user-centered design. Here, I show how "the user" is not only an empathetic re-framing of schooling's constituents, but an epistemological one as design thinking poses that "users" are not passive generators of data, but should be engaged as reflexive knowledge producers through ethnographic study of design processes. Third, I highlight Incubator's mechanisms for collaborative and iterative design and their commitment to scaling down. These modes of collaboration are meant to serve as small scale attempts to "fail fast" and absorb user feedback into iterative design cycles at a rapid pace, reducing risk while increasing learning, however they also inaugurate new burdens and regimes of evaluative labor.

Chapter Five is an investigation of the forms of racial expertise mobilized by a start-up that provides "diverse" and "creative" substitute teachers for charter schools and argues that the newfound labor precarity of teachers has created a situation in which an educator's racial sincerities can become a marketable asset subject to entrepreneurial cultivation as well as an opportunity for contesting dominant culture. The startup, which I call ConnectED and which was developed at Incubator, offers a "flexible" staffing platform for school administrators to hire substitute teachers. Charter schools in New Orleans do not typically use substitute teachers. Without a union contract, they can ask remaining teachers to cover classes as at-will employees. Furthermore, as a result of the commitment to school culture discussed in chapters 1 and 2, school leaders are reluctant to bring in substitutes who are not familiar with the "unique school culture" of their campus, in particular classroom management and discipline techniques.

ConnectED promises to provide teachers who can "hold down the room" and are familiar with charter school culture expectations.

However, ConnectED also draws its substitutes from a talent pool far more diverse than the typical staff at a No Excuses charter school. Many of the teachers are local to New Orleans, black, veteran educators, or young artists and professionals looking for part time work. ConnectED's business model relies on their teachers performing both "fit" and cultural enrichment. This model rests not on teachers performing displays of racial authenticity, but racial sincerity (Jackson 2005). Through their precarious position in the teacher labor force, these teachers also add new dimensions to the meanings of flexibility in teaching work. While this position entails a certain amount of insecurity, these educators also use their indigenous outsider status to challenge school cultures from within, if only provisionally. ConnectED and its teachers are instructive because they show how the racialized expertise generated by education reform is not only the province of broad institutions, but is also taken up and adapted by a range of actors.

CHAPTER 1

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A BAD TEACHER: RACE AND TALENT IN POST-KATRINA CHARTER SCHOOLS

The underclass myth is attractive precisely because it does not exist as anyone's self-description.
-Adolph Reed (1997)

Because the authority to define societal values is a major instrument of power, elite groups, in exercising power, manipulate ideas about Black womanhood. They do so by exploiting already existing symbols, or creating new ones. Hazel Carby suggests that the objective of stereotypes is "not to reflect or represent a reality but to function as a disguise, or mystification, of objective social relations" (1987, 22). These controlling images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life. Even when the initial conditions that foster controlling images disappear, such images prove remarkably tenacious because they not only subjugate U.S. Black women but are key in maintaining intersecting oppressions (Mullings 1997, 109–30). African-American women's status as outsiders becomes the point from which other groups define their normality.

-Patricia Hill Collins (2000)

"After lots of studies, we've come down to just what most parents believe, and that is a good teacher is what's working, and a bad teacher is what's not working," states Eric Hanushek, fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institute and an expert on economic and education policy (Guggenheim 2010). Davis Guggenheim, the director and narrator of the 2010 film *Waiting for Superman,* tells us that Dr. Hanushek "has tracked the effect of individual teachers on groups of kids." Dr. Hanushek tells us that "the difference between a really good teacher and a really bad teacher is one year of learning per academic year." We cut to cartoons of good and bad teachers as Guggenheim narrates, "Students with high performing teachers progress three times as fast as those with low performing teachers, and yet they cost the same to the school. A bad teacher covers only 50 percent of the required curriculum in a school year. A good teacher can cover 150 percent." Ten minutes later, after Guggenheim and various educators and reformers discuss the

inability to get rid of bad teachers, we return to Dr. Hanushek who claims that "If in fact we could just eliminate the bottom 6-10% of our teachers, and replace them with an average teacher, we could bring the average US student up to the level of Finland, which is at the top of the world today."

According to this film, in order for schools to *work*, we need to cultivate and retain *good* teachers and get rid of fiscally and pedagogically costly *bad* teachers. Working is multiple, both the function of broader social mechanisms and the labor of teachers as embodied practitioners. The film claims that charter schools can identify and calibrate the proper talent for schools because they have the flexibility to hire and fire teachers at will without the impediments of collective bargaining[1]. This approach to education atomizes teachers as a class and places them under the individual administrative control of school leadership assuming a kind of audit culture whereby results can be quantified and fixed to individual teachers as somatic units. This idea that good and bad teachers can be identified with quantifiable evidence and reasonable certainty is a powerful fantasy and one of the key persuasive fictions of education reform discourses.[2] The film was enthusiastically received by charter school proponents – reform oriented non-profits organized trips to showings with colleagues and set up screenings at colleges and universities across the country to encourage undergraduates to apply to alternative certification organizations. By firing nearly 8,000 school teachers and employees of a "failed" school system in one fell swoop and shifting towards recruitment from alternative certification organizations like Teach

[1] Though several charter schools in New Orleans, and many others across the country, Los Angeles in particular, have had successful unionization drives.

[2] I use fantasy here not in a pejorative sense, but merely to contrast the certainty of this vision of an educational audit culture with the bounty of research which challenges the idea that identifying, quantifying, and acting upon teacher performance and quality is so clear cut. Fantasy here, is used anthropologically, to indicate a motivating discourse playing on a complex and situational set of social desires.

for America and Teach Nola, policymakers in New Orleans embraced the fantasy of good and bad teachers at a scale and pace far greater than any other city in the United States.[3]

Charles Payne, examining the "persistence of failure in urban schools," claims that the question of "what works", despite its enduring place in education reform discourses, is woefully inadequate (Payne 2008). For Payne, the question of "what" works usually ignores the question of "who" works and how they work together. The danger of the "what works" question is that it radically decontextualizes the practice of education, ignoring singularities and situations, flattening actors and history, posing that pedagogical and institutional knowledge can be easily translated from one context to another. Following Payne, we have to pay attention not simply to what bad teachers, *as fact and fantasy,* do and to what values they produce, but to who they are and how they work, in a social and historical context. That the disarticulating force of the audit culture fantasy of teacher quality would be applied maximally in this particular city is one the supreme ironies of the charter school reform project. New Orleans is a city that embraces it history and uniqueness with greater flair, intensity, and industry than perhaps any other in the country (Dawdy 2016, Sakakeeny 2017). That a city which cultivates a sense of its distinctiveness so boldly would become ground zero for a project that seeks to model, scale, and replicate the institutional units and discourses of charter schools is one the great contradictions of charter based reform.

New Orleans has a long and rich history of teacher organizing and political involvement. Black teachers were critical leaders in the civil rights movement and organized the first interracial teachers union in the southern United States (Devore and Logsdon 1991, Fairclough

[3] Researchers and reformers in New Orleans still regard teacher quality as the number one "lever" for improving school quality while admitting that this is the arena in which reform has struggled most (Harris et al 2015)

1995). A wide array of my informants and other stakeholders have referred to black teachers in New Orleans as "the backbone of the black middle class". With such a strong cultural and institutional base, how did black teachers become vulnerable to being fired en masse and slotted into the role of the bad teacher? How did young, alternatively certified, white transplants become the ideal vision of "talent" in the eyes of policymakers, education non-profits, and CMO leaders? Others have documented the policy changes and imperatives which incentivized the shift to hiring these teachers as more flexible and inexpensive alternatives to veteran teachers with prior expectations for work discipline and benefits (Buras 2015, Dixon 2011). In this chapter, I focus on the ideological deployment of teacher quality discourses as they became embodied in the figures of "bad" or ineffective teachers and the "talent" which came to replace them. What kind of work does the figure of the "bad teacher" do and how is the "good teacher" or "talent" constructed in response to these narratives? How do these figures articulate and reproduce entangled race, class, and gender ideologies? Surely, before and after Act 35 there are both deficient and excellent teachers who have had great impact on their students and community's lives. But the figures of the "bad teacher" and "talent" are tethered to these actors in only a partial fashion and their purposes and deployments exceed pedagogical imperatives. They are heterogeneous fantasies with lives of their own and it is important to engage them as such in order to break out of a debate framework which is often constricted to either defending or critiquing the performance of traditional public or charter schools and the people that work in them.

These figures can be effective in part because of their seeming self-evidence, but my field research among educators in New Orleans from 2010-2015 indicates that they draw much of their potency from their flexible and experimental character. Like many other kinds of myths,

they are adapted to the circumstances at hand and transform through time. Indeed, as charter schools have become the dominant institutional form in New Orleans, the "bad teacher" has receded as a figure and teacher quality discourse has become more oriented around discussion of "fit" and "pipelines". Rather than try to figure out who was "really" a bad teacher or a talented one, this chapter asks us to consider the relationships of these conceptions to each other, and the ideological character of the boundary making between the two. By doing so, we can begin reconsider our investments in the discourse of teacher quality itself and the baggage it carries with it.

I argue that the twinned fantasies of bad teachers and talent are significant in two crucial respects. First, they work to focus conceptions and critiques of education and reform on individuals, shifting responsibility for failure and success on atomized educators at the same time that power and authority in charter schools has been shifted towards administration, CMOs, and the state government. This tendency is a feature of "fragmented centralization" (Monahan 2005) whereby authority is concentrated up social hierarchies and accountability is intensified downwards on more vulnerable members of society, and can be seen in the restructuring of the US welfare state more broadly, such as the increasingly punitive surveillance experienced by welfare recipients (Wacquant 2009). This restructuring of accountability is at the heart of the charter school model as adopted in New Orleans. Individual charter management organizations contract with the state government or another public oversight body to run one or several schools and are responsible for hitting targets heavily weighted with quantitative metrics such as test scores, yearly progress rates, and graduation rates. The responsibility spirals downward, and individual teachers are held accountable to these metrics at the level of the classroom and individual students. These shifts de-socialize educators, encouraging strategies of self-care and

entrepreneurialism of the self, rather than collective action as well as encourage a relationship to data which social scientists have cautioned corrupts its pedagogical validity (Palko and Gelman 2016). While data-philic reformers and researchers see great promise in the ability to track and hold accountable teachers and students on an individual level, there are unintended consequences to the labor process, incentive structures, and social coordination of educators that may impede teaching and learning. Chapter 2, which focuses on the working lives of teachers in New Orleans charters schools, will address these strategies more directly.

Second, I argue that the ideological distinctions between bad teachers and talent are not only formed in ways that that have racially discriminating outcomes, but that the process of making these distinctions are sites and grounds of "racecraft", generating new racial politics and meanings (Fields and Fields 2014). Race is not an objective and a priori factor that can be analytically applied to discourses of teacher quality. Rather, race and racism have been crafted and reproduced within regimes of human capital, amongst other sites, from enslavement to the present. It is worth considering Fields and Fields concept at length,

> Distinct from race and racism, racecraft does not refer to groups or to ideas about groups' traits, however odd both may appear in close-up. It refers instead to mental terrain and to pervasive belief. Like physical terrain, racecraft exists objectively; it has topographical features that Americans regularly navigate, and we cannot readily stop traversing it. Unlike physical terrain, racecraft originates not in nature but in human action and imagination; it can exist in no other way. The action and imagining are collective yet individual, day-to-day yet historical, and consequential even though nested in mundane routine. The action and imagining emerge as part of moment-to-moment practicality, that is, thinking about and executing every purpose under the sun. Do not look for racecraft, therefore, only where it might be said to "belong." Finally, racecraft is not a euphemistic substitute for racism. It is a kind of fingerprint evidence that racism has been on the scene (ibid).

The distinctions made between bad teachers and talent not only involve intergroup competition, prejudice, or discrimination. These distinctions are the culmination of day to day practices and

institutional imperatives which form a crucial part of the terrain upon which race and racism are reconstructed in post-Katrina New Orleans. This means that while charter reform may be dominated by white actors and interests, black and local actors can be incorporated within as well as reshape reform agendas, as seen in other spheres of New Orleans reconstruction, such as public housing (Arena 2011).

From 2010-2015, I have conducted ethnographic research with educators in charter schools, non-profits, edu-businesses, and community organizations in New Orleans. This chapter is based on notes and interviews from these sites focusing in particular on the reflections of veteran and new teachers and human capital managers and administrators in charter schools. Before moving into ethnographic data, I will provide context on the forms of disinvestment New Orleans schools operated within before the storm as well as the political economy of reconstruction in New Orleans and charter schools in general. Next, I present the ways in which the past of the New Orleans school system was staged by some of my interlocutors. Then I will examine the firing of veteran New Orleans educators and the faces of the "bad teacher" in these narratives. After looking at hiring processes in contemporary charter schools, I present and analyze the "talent" which replaced them, as well as their interpretive labor and ambivalence vis-a-vis their own positions. Finally, I offer some conclusions on the relative shift from the bad teacher to talent as the lynchpin of teacher quality discourse over the course of ten years of post-Katrina education reform.

Disinvestment and Reconstruction

New Orleans public schools have been subject to national intervention and embroiled in racial and class politics since their inception. An alliance of local elites and New England

transplants founded the system in the 19th century and African Americans and Creoles fought for most of the following century for equitable access to and participation within the system (Logsdon and Devore 1991). Black educators organized into a union that would become the United Teachers of New Orleans, and were instrumental in fighting for civil rights, school integration, and were a model of social justice unionism (Buras 2015, Fairclough 1995). However, these gains were compromised and provisional, like most political accomplishments. White families began a dramatic exit from the public school system and the city in the late 60's and early 70's, though these two exits do not so neatly coincide as popular history might have it (Lassiter 2006). This move cannot be merely reduced to racial prejudice, as the class interests of white property owners were bound up in school construction and perceived values. New school construction had driven property values in prior decades (Stern 2014), and negative associations with integrated schools could drive them down as well, augmenting incentives for white flight seen nationwide. From that point forward until 2005, New Orleans schools were subject to "aggressive neglect" (Ladson-Billings 2006), and the gains of decades of organizing and agitation were eroded, as in other aspects of the welfare state, including the erosion of public benefits and the conversion of public housing into mixed used private developments (Arena 2011, Germany 2007).

Before the impact of Hurricane Katrina and subsequent levee failures in 2005, New Orleans Public Schools were regarded by many as some of the worst in the United States, both by quantitative performance indicators and by qualitative descriptions of the corruption and ineffectiveness and neglect of the system, emblematic of many "inner city" or "urban" school

districts.[4] In the aftermath of the storm and levee failures the state of Louisiana used a state emergency powers law, Act 35, to take over what the government deemed, under recently revised accountability metrics, as failing schools in Orleans Parish.[5] The state run Recovery School District shut down the vast majority of schools and, as of Fall 2014, has converted all these to charter schools; publically funded but typically non-unionized schools run by a range of groups including non-profit and for-profit, local and non-local charter management organizations and smaller community organizations. This profound transformation of the school system has left New Orleans with the highest proportion of charter schools in the country by far and has marked it as a focal point of national conflicts over the politics of education reform, charter schools, and private management of public education.

In the process of executing Act 35 letters of termination were sent to all of the roughly 8,000 New Orleans Public school employees in schools taken over by the RSD. More than 70% of these employees were African American and they represented 4% of the working age black population of the city at that time (Harris et al 2015). In the subsequent reorganization, terminated employees were not given preferential hiring status, a right typically bargained for by unionized teachers. Technically, all the schools under the RSD were considered new institutional entities. According to a United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO) report, only 46% of the dismissed teachers returned to NOPS by August 2006, and my interviews with union members indicate that attrition and retirement rates were high in the following years (United Teachers of

[4] According to a state measured School Performance Score, 63 percent of public schools in New Orleans were deemed Academically Unacceptable (AUS) at the end of the 2004-2005 school year. SPS is a composite score based on student academic performance, attendance, dropout rates, and the graduation index. Additionally, the "The OPSB (Orleans Parish School Board) and the district central office continued to be considered ineffective and corrupt, so much so that in 2004 a special FBI task force was assigned to investigate the school system and 11 district employees were indicted" (Vaughn 2012). However, we must remember that suck metrics and narratives are contingent and ideological to make meaning of them.

[5] Buras (2015) and Dixson (2011) demonstrate how the metrics and definitions of failure were politically contentious and under continuous negotiation in the process of enacting Act 35.

New Orleans 2006). Furthermore, charter management organizations (CMO) opted or were discouraged from participating in the teacher retirement system, hampering their ability to hire and attract veteran teachers.[6]

Superintendent Paul Vallas, brought in to run the RSD in 2007 after serving similar roles in Philadelphia and Chicago, argued that veteran teachers were not pushed out, but that CMO's were expressing their autonomous preferences by hiring a "mixed selection of teachers". National foundations, such as Gates and Broad, provided injections of funding for alternative certification organizations (Teach for America, Teach Nola) and human capital incubators (New Schools for New Orleans) who perceived that they needed a "new influx of talent" in order to improve New Orleans schools, turning to new sources for their teaching staffs. As a result, the overall New Orleans teaching corps became "younger, whiter, less indigenous, and more likely to come from an alternative certification program" (Vaughn 2012). This trend was also reflected in the composition of decision-makers at the administrative and policy levels (Buras 2015). However, recent years have seen a significant increase in racial diversity and teachers of local origin provided by Teach for America, increased partnerships with local universities to build talent pipelines, and locals taking policy leadership roles, such as current RSD superintendent Patrick Dobard. These trends demonstrate that though the dominant "color of reform" may be white, it is possible for pro-charter organizations to embrace and generate new racial politics of recognition and selective inclusion.

In the aftermath of the Post-Katrina levee failures, decades of disinvestment positioned schools as one of several public services ripe for reconstruction. Rather than reinvigorate

[6] The veteran teachers that remain in the system are disproportionately clustered in the few charters that are run by local veteran administrators who have tended to opt into the retirement system.

degraded public infrastructures and services, elites and policymakers relied on voluntarism, foundations, and private contracting to clean up neighborhoods, rebuild housing, and reorganize schools (Adams 2013, Johnson et al 2011). These reconstruction efforts all bear the mark of fragmented centralization. Democratic authority and decision making were usurped by private and elite entrepreneurialism while vulnerability, responsibility, and risk were de-socialized (Klein 2007). While some have remarked upon a flourishing of activism and civil society organizations in the aftermath of the storm (Flaherty 2010), others have cautioned us to be wary of the diminution of public and collective responses to disaster (Adams 2013). These modes of reconstruction which favor individual entrepreneurialism over social democracy are not unique to New Orleans, and have been seen around the globe (Gunewardena 2008).

Charter schools and private management of schools in particular became a favored method of not only the reconstruction of public education, but also served as a symbol of the rebirth of the city of New Orleans as a broader political, economic, and cultural entity. Proponents of charter based reforms have argued that charter schools benefit students through increased autonomy, flexibility, choice, and accountability, while critics have responded that charter schools are unaccountable to the public, undermine teachers through labor precarity, impose false or asymmetric choices, and narrowly focus on testing (Buras 2015, Ravitch 2013). While charter oriented critiques of traditional public school have a basis in the "good sense" of educator and community dissatisfaction with neglect and disinvestment, they also encourage the erosion of communal solidarity in favor of atomized and individual responses to school reform (Lipman 2011). This raises the contradiction that parents and communities are supposed to be empowered through exercising choice in their consumption of education services at the same time that they are reduced to "objects of administration" at the level of policy and politics (Reed

and Steinberg 2006).[7] Teachers, meanwhile, are generally discouraged or barred from unionizing in charter schools, with some exceptions. Self-cultivation and entrepreneurial development of individual human capital has become the alternative to collective bargaining.

It is important to place the figures of the bad teacher and talent in this historical context. The bad teacher becomes the bête noire of charter based education reform at the precise moment when decades of racialized disinvestment in public institutions dovetails with ideological investments in the individual as the font of political action, responsibility, and blame.

Nightmarish Narratives

"What were the schools like before Hurricane Katrina?" This was one of the first questions I asked my informants, whether they had been living and working in the school system for decades or fresh arrivals. Before considering the figure of the bad teacher itself, it's important to understand the mythological terrain it operates within. Thus in the following section, I attend to the ways in which my informants attempt a systemic assessment of the failures (and successes) of New Orleans Public Schools before Act 35. The stories we draw in response can help us better understand the registers within which systemic critiques are made and give us a better appreciation of the justificatory landscape produced by tales of "failure".

Most of my informants painted a critical picture of New Orleans Public Schools before Act 35. Dr. Broadus, a former charter network executive, said the system was a "nightmare", a word that popped up for several others. Both Jessie and Val, novice transplant teachers, claimed that their perceptions of "pre-reform" NOPS as a failure were shaped by popular media (New

[7]This is not to say that CMO's never engage parents in other modes. However, these efforts are uneven and haphazard "participatory technologies" (McQuarrie 2013) as opposed to systematic democratic participation in school governance.

York Times Editorial Board 2011) and advisors in their summer and ongoing training sessions. They were told that the schools were "completely dysfunctional" and that "teachers didn't care". According to these two young teachers these narratives were always coupled with proclamations of how much better things are now. Emile, a current principal who had taught in the city before Katrina, talked about their frustration with having to make extraordinary efforts just to track down their paycheck and other administrative paperwork, a far cry from the efficiency and care of their current CMO. "Corruption" among the Orleans Parish School Board and politicians was also cited as a problem among several interviewees. These characterizations evoke an image of an institutional bureaucracy in chaos. While they may overestimate the degree of operational dysfunction on a system wide level, they have a Gramscian "good sense" to them. The pre-Katrina school district cut checks inappropriately to "retired, fired, or even dead" recipients and came under federal indictment for contracting violations (Harris et al 2015). Rather than validate the notion of the entire school system as irredeemably corrupt, we should recognize the ways that public resources, including schools, have a long record of being subject to rent-seeking strategies from unscrupulous groups and individuals.

Informants also keyed in on academic performance when assessing the pre-Katrina schools, and in doing so often shifted between qualitative and quantitative registers. Aubrey, a manager at an education non-profit in the city, noted that they had arrived to teach in New Orleans five years before Act 35 and couched their critique of the old system in more quantitative terms. "66 percent of schools were unacceptable" and "not prepping kids on any major indicator." This reckoning is rooted in a familiarity with state accountability standards. A 2015 report characterized the state of pre Katrina schools,

> In the 2004-05 school year, Orleans Parish public schools ranked 67th out of 68 districts in mathematics and reading test scores in the Louisiana accountability system. Fully 63 percent of public schools in New Orleans were deemed "academically unacceptable" by Louisiana accountability standards, compared to just eight percent of public schools across Louisiana. The graduation rate was 54 percent, 10 percentage points below the state average. And Louisiana consistently ranked 49th out of 50 states on national tests. The next-to-lowest ranked district, in the next-to-lowest ranked state, had nowhere to go but up (Harris et al 2015).

Despite the widespread notion that schools were failing, Aubrey asserted that the "dominant narrative doesn't do justice to the inadequacy… In 2004, the top student in NOPS couldn't pass a college entrance exam." This account turns out to be a bit of an exaggeration. I was able to find news stories from that year about a valedictorian at one high school who flunked the math portion of the high school exit exam five times. Terry, an organizer familiar with the student in the narrative, expressed frustration to me with the way their story was being used to drive notions of wholesale academic malfeasance. At the end of their reflection, Aubrey shifted tack and emphasized that "there was a lot of belief that you couldn't solve the problem… if you look around now, you can see excellent schools. Before Katrina, there was not one."[8] While the measured challenges facing NOPS were daunting, for Aubrey, a foreclosed sense of possibility and lack of faith were the most debilitating. They indicate that something in these discursive shifts prompted by Post-Katrina reforms reopened a sense of possibility. Aubrey's support for charter reforms were rooted partly in their own experience of the pain of disinvestment and neglect, not an abstract ideological commitment to the privatization of public institutions.

However, other informants emphasized the structural constraints facing public schools in the post-civil rights era. Brett, a self-described radical and veteran teacher of over twenty years,

[8] I assume the Aubrey means there wasn't one excellent school serving primarily poor and Black students, as there are several selective public schools which are regarded as some of the best in the state.

emphasized how severely under-resourced NOPS was before the influx of reformers after Act 35. Framing failure narratives in terms of class and race struggle, they cautioned me,

> Most narratives about the schools before Katrina are deliberately simplistic and ill informed. They're narratives of people in power…The narrative of abject failure is wrong…This city doesn't care about educating poor people…As soon as desegregation was on the table white people and rich people fled from an investment in the public schools.

Ryan, a native of the city, former teacher, and graduate student, noted that after official school desegregation white people carved out their own private sphere.[9] Reverend Douglass conceded that there was an "academic crisis" but that it was "exaggerated by metrics".[10] The real problem was that we had a "culture which neglected the education of children and a disintegration of family and school system." For Rev. Douglass, an excessive focus on test scores obscures other more salient issues in black communities that should also be within the purview of the education system. For all of these informants, public schools were beset by external structural and cultural forces which impeded their ability to serve students and communities.

Salim, a longtime activist and teacher, asserted that schools were functioning properly, but with political economic imperatives "appropriate for a tourist based economy… the schools are like this to staff hotels… You have the ingredients of an apartheid school system." Furthermore, Salim insisted that when evaluating education reform after Act 35, "I wouldn't fall into the trap of the schools being better or worse." If some schools are no longer being allowed to fail, Salim asks us to think what economic purpose this might serve and what transitions this new orientation to schooling may represent. As noted before, schools have been historically linked to real estate value and re-investment in schools can go together with privatized

[9] Despite being a relatively poor city, New Orleans has the second highest proportion of students in private school (to San Francisco). At the time of Act 35, the public schools were 94% Black, despite the city population being only about 68% Black. (Vaughn 2012)

[10] The actual status that demarcated a school as failing was called "Academically in Crisis".

redevelopment of housing (Lipman 2011, Stern 2014). As some leaders of New Orleans school reform have stayed long enough to have children ready to enter public schools, they have focused on creating diverse schools which can attract middle class and professional parents (Carr 2013). Without protection and provision of affordable housing, this attractiveness can contribute to housing pressure for low income families as public housing is replaced with fewer mixed income developments and wealthier families move into the city (Arena 2011).

Despite the broad consensus that NOPS faced significant barriers to educating children many informants insisted that there were spaces in which positive efforts were made. These were most often described as "pockets of excellence," "reformers," or that "there were some good teachers". Aubrey felt that these efforts were isolated and ineffective. Brett, on the other hand felt that the efforts of veteran teachers were ignored because they didn't link up with the ideologies of education foundations on the question of charter schools and unionization. Nathaniel Lacour, a former leader of UTNO, stated in an interview with *Democracy Now*, "Let me simply say this: I don't think there's anybody in New Orleans who would say that they were satisfied with the school system prior to Katrina, because there's an effort to say that there are people here who want the status quo. That is not true" (Democracy Now! 2007). One of the effects of the "bad teacher" is that it obscures the complex histories of contestation over schools in New Orleans, grouping anyone who wants to paint anything more than a uniformly bleak picture of the public schools before Katrina as defenders of the "status quo". The new system vs the old system debate becomes a kind of identity politics, rather than allowing for the recognition of varying agendas, perspectives, and ambiguous politics.

A crucial aspect of these assessments of good teachers before the storm was the feeling that while veteran teachers were not measuring up according to certain testing metrics[11], that other contributions were not valued or even accounted for. Dr. Sullivan, a school administrator before Act 35, thought that "teachers before Katrina were outstanding." They particularly esteemed their presence in NOPS after white flight claiming, "some people wouldn't venture into the neighborhoods that we served. These were violent places, but we did our job because we cared deeply about educating these children." George, a former teacher, stated, "those who would paint a broad picture of failure are not seeing the big picture... Success is lowering the dropout rate, lowering violence, increasing the possibility for kids to succeed and go to college."[12] One of the effects of the audit cultures (Strathern 2000) favored by charter schools is that these dimensions of success are not captured by quantifiable metrics. In fieldwork conducted after these interviews, I encountered charter schools focusing more on soft skills and community relations, in part due to the lack of success their students were having in college and in part as a response to community pushback against high suspension rates and punitive discipline.

Familial connection and the ties between school and community emerged as a critical theme among positive accounts of teachers before Act 35. Harper, a veteran teacher of 29 years, told me that "At my school, everyone was a family member." They stressed that they "went into homes… sometimes in dangerous areas." Ryan, a recent graduate of Douglass High School, claimed that they chose Douglass over high schools with better academic reputations because of their family history. It was important to them that the teachers there knew their family. Ryan as

[11] According to the Cowen Institute, in 2007, half of the prospective teaching pool failed a newly implemented basic skills exam. (Vaughn 2012)

[12] Echoing these concerns, Holly Sywers (2003), in a dissertation focused on notions of success in a Chicago public high school, has argued that schools and teachers succeed at broader social functions which are devalued by a narrow focus on test scores and narratives of school failure.

well as other informants stated that “In New Orleans, people don’t ask you where you went to college like other cities. ‘What school you went to?’ means high school…[13] That makes you who you are.” Ryan loved that their civics teacher lived close by and that they would run into them on the way to and from school. “There is just something to having teachers that live close.” Johnny Bridges recounted his feelings on the radio program *The New Orleans Imperative* after Act 35, "I was on the job for 29 years so I got into generations and when you get into generations you have the support of those families because I taught your mother, Son. So all I have to do is make a phone call. So it was our relationship with those children that a lot of folks didn't understand" (New Orleans Imperative 2011). Today, transplant teachers often tell stories about venturing into homes and neighborhoods of their students and the value of the communal relations they build during their teaching experiences.[14] In 2014, I observed teachers at a charter school and new TFA corps members on separate occasions as they prepared to canvass the communities of their students, a sign of growing cultural sophistication and intensifying racecraft.

The media and academia have produced countless accounts of inner city public schools as pathologically dysfunctional in the post “A Nation at Risk” era. These narratives, in their sober and sensationalist forms, certainly form a discursive background for education stakeholders. However, what I found, particularly among veteran educators, both pro- and anti-reform was a kind of wounded reflection on “what the schools were like” before Katrina. Charter advocates and operators include many like Emile and Aubrey, who worked in public schools before the storm as self-conscious reformers and felt stymied by the traditional public school system. The principal at the charter elementary school in which I taught in Harlem was one of these people. Their support for charter based reform is rooted in an intimate frustration with the

[13] A line told to me on many occasions by multiple informants.
[14] “My/our kids” is a particularly frequent phrase among TFA corps members.

bureaucratic dysfunctions of traditional schools systems. On the other hand, many veterans critical of reform articulate a feeling of being unappreciated for the difficult task of teaching in such an environment and being blamed for outcomes beyond their control. While many accounts of post-Katrina reform assert that the storm "destroyed" the school system, allowing reformers to "start over", there is no particular reason the system had to be reconstructed as primarily composed of charter schools. A storm can destroy physical capital and harm and displace "human capital", but it cannot destroy an institutional and political form. The traditional public school system in New Orleans was vulnerable to destruction as a form, in part, because even those who knew it best were deeply wounded by it and either unable or unwilling to defend it.

Terminated

On January 31st, 2006 the teachers and school staff of the Orleans Parish School Board received letters of termination. Johnny Bridges recounts the moment of notification,

> …and then the school board sent a letter saying that we were all terminated. And it was devastating because, working at a place for so long and then being sent a letter of termination with no reason. Now it's OK to fire somebody, I imagine, but you have to have a reason and there was no reason, you know, no reason given in that letter (The New Orleans Imperative 2011).

Mr. Bridges seems to be disconcerted with the impersonal nature of his termination rather than the mere outcome. Given the enduring dislocations after the storm and levee failures, many teachers did not even receive the letters and found out about the mass firing secondhand (Buras 2015). Mr. Bridges further articulates the betrayal of intimacy in his termination,

> In order for you to be a teacher, it's a special gift. It's not about the money, number one. You spend a lot of years trying to train kids to be productive citizens in society and what you do is for the love of children, it's not for the love of money. The loyalty that the teachers of Orleans Parish had, it's unbelievable, I mean we're educated people, we could all find something else to do, but we decided to make this our life's work. To be terminated by people who sit on a board, never walked in a classroom, don't understand

> the art of teaching and they decide they want to change course and leave you out of the equation… that's not fair… it's not fair. If I can be loyal to you for 29 years and accept all the foolishness that the board should have been doing to improve test scores… because this is a partnership (The New Orleans Imperative 2011).

For Mr. Bridges, who fired him and how they did it is as important as the fact of dismissal itself. He knows and accepts that regimes of evaluation are part of the game, so to speak, but the standards seem to have changed. He claims that he and other teachers sacrificed for their love of children and that their efforts and expertise were not respected. Mr. Bridges evokes a deep hurt at the way in which people, *whom he does not know*, sit in judgment of him without the courtesy of presenting themselves. Again, this shift towards impersonal, standardized, and portable evaluation is a hallmark of audit cultures.

At the same time, Bridges romanticizes the teaching profession and challenges the ability of outsiders to relate to the student population implying that there are people, people with "the gift" who are proper stewards of the students of NOPS. This narrative evokes long term discourses of uplift in which middle class African Americans have a moral calling to bring the lower classes up, or in the words of Mr. Bridges, to "train kids to be productive citizens in society." Charles Payne has cautioned against over-romanticizing teachers or attributing to them a particular kind of progressive politics, claiming that black (and other) public school teachers are often one of the greatest sources of pathologizing and functionalist accounts of their low-income students (Payne 2008). Dr. Spears, a local educational researcher, also laughed at those who would imagine black teachers as uni-dimensionally progressive, claiming that to do so ignores conservative tendencies among them and papers over class difference among black communities. The commonsense that black teachers were the "backbone of the black middle class" shouldn't only evoke sympathy for the evisceration of a class fraction among New Orleans black communities. It should also remind us that these teachers lived and operated as a

"professional managerial class" which was partially responsible for managing deviance and respectability among marginalized poor and black students and families. Their dismissal should be sympathized with, but should also provoke us to ask what their dissolution or diminution as a class can tell us about the realignment of class forces within the city at large.

To go from respected, secure, and relatively well compensated employment to precarity, derision, and suspicion was quite jarring for many veteran educators. I sat with Harper at the United Teachers of New Orleans office and we discussed their teaching career and their feelings about being fired as a result of Act 35. Rather than re-enter the system and attempt to compete for a job at a new charter school, Mrs. Riley decided to take an early retirement package. She describes her decision,

> It's heartbreaking, going through Katrina and then finding out you don't have a job…I taught for 29 years. I have a Master's Degree. I never got a U.[15] Then you say you are looking for highly qualified teachers and I have to take a test! I was not going to do that! They don't respect your credentials. They could have brought us back… You can't do just anything to veteran teachers... I would still be teaching, but once they started talking about not hiring us back and doing all this testing, I said no. I was good enough before and after.

Harper indicates that for some period, it seemed possible, even likely that they and other veteran teachers would be able to easily transition back into the classroom, a possibility foreclosed by new regimes of accountability. Aubrey was puzzled by the notion that veteran teachers would feel shut out, claiming that "there were plenty of jobs". Indeed, in the first years after Act 35, the district claimed to be facing a teacher shortage. However, this was a result of a lack of "human capital", teachers who met new standards of accountability which Mrs. Riley felt to be disrespectful and dehumanizing, and not a lack of applicants.

[15] Meaning an "Unsatisfactory" rating on teacher evaluation.

A group of teachers and lawyers filed a class action lawsuit against the state and the Orleans Parish School Board and this became a site for the articulation of loss as well. Karran Harper Royal, a parent activist, used her twitter account to live report the testimony at the teacher's class action suit of Cynthia Jordan, a fired teacher, writing on Twitter,

> #nolaed Ms. Jordan became very emotional as she talked about being given 2 hours to clear out 16 years of possessions at her school…#nolaed, it never occurred to Ms. Jordan that she wouldn't have a job to come back to. She was ready to clean her school… #nolaed This kind of job instability compounds the stress of losing your job in the midst of the worst disaster in this country's history (Jun 06, 2011).

On an intimate scale we see how the specific possessions and space of Ms. Jordan's classroom can possess an irreducible and incommensurable value. The disruption and detachment experienced by teachers after the flooding are not merely experiences of emotional distress but also a kind of mirrored disintegration between subject and object/space, articulated by Royal as she re-tweets DSTDIVA498's tweet about the testimony of Lois Marie Charles Lockett, "#nolaed breaks down as she describes the disrepair of the bldg in 2006. Cries as she describes bldg torn down…" (Jun 7, 2011). After proclaiming that they were "good enough" Harper continued to articulate their sense of loss,

> I was a very dedicated teacher. I was the first in the door in the morning, and the last out at night. They took that away from me. That was a part of me, my livelihood… I'm sorry. I have to stop. I might cry and mess up my makeup. (smiles) Once you're a teacher, if it's in your blood, it's there until you die… What else can I do?

What exactly was taken away from Harper, or Johnny Bridges or Ms. Jordan or Ms. Lockett? More than a job, these teachers seem distraught at the rending of a profoundly meaningful social and professional relationship, one deepened by its duration.

The mass firing of mostly black veteran teachers in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina is but the most dramatic instantiation of a nationwide trend. According to *Mother Jones*,

> In Philadelphia and across the country, scores of schools have been closed, radically restructured, or replaced by charter schools. And in the process, the face of the teaching workforce has changed. In one of the most far-reaching consequences of the past decade's wave of education reform, the nation has lost tens of thousands of experienced black teachers and principals… the number of black educators has declined sharply in some of the largest urban school districts in the nation. In Philadelphia, the number of black teachers declined by 18.5 percent between 2001 and 2012. In Chicago, the black teacher population dropped by nearly 40 percent. And in New Orleans, there was a 62 percent drop in the number of black teachers… In all, that means 26,000 African American teachers have disappeared from the nation's public schools—even as the overall teaching workforce has increased by 134,000. Countless black principals, coaches, cafeteria workers, nurses, and counselors have also been displaced—all in the name of raising achievement among black students. While white Americans are slowly waking up to the issue of police harassment and violence in black communities, many are unaware of the quiet but broad damage the loss of African American educators inflicts on the same communities (Rizga 2016).

Figure 1. Decline in Black Teach Employment 2000 - 2012

CITY	OVERALL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Boston	-3.3	-0.8	-18.3	1.1
Chicago	-13.4	-3.2	-39.2	6.4
Cleveland	-17.4	-12.0	-33.9	-9.4
Los Angeles	-16.9	-28.0	-33.2	6.5
New Orleans	-44.4	3.3	-62.3	43.5
New York City	-2.0	-1.9	-15.1	2.4
San Francisco	-11.9	-21.9	-32.4	8.1

Source: Albert Shanker Institute. Dates studied range from 2000 to 2012.

The firing of New Orleans public school employees was not only a profoundly painful experience for those educators but also a realignment of class forces in the city. We should think of their firing as part of a class coup against the “Black Urban Regime” (Reed 1999). This does not mean that individuals within the black professional managerial class cannot rearticulate themselves to new structures of power as we have seen in public housing and the political domains (Reed 2011). The significant point here is to mind how the firing of black teachers and

their framing within a discourse of insufficient talent atomizes their class power and places them within a framework of individualistic evaluation. Even sympathetic renderings of veteran teachers as victims of pernicious reforms traps them within the atomizing framework of victimhood without articulating the significance of their dismissal as a class.

Faces of the Bad Teacher

While the dismissal and attrition of the veteran teacher corps is a part of a classed realignment of power in post-Katrina New Orleans, it is essential to probe the racialization of educators in order to understand how public schools came to be pathologized is the ways other facets of black life have been in the postwar era. Dr. Spears claimed that in New Orleans before Act 35, "public school teacher meant black teacher" and thought that the "bad teacher talk" helps to "assuage the guilt of Teach for America people" for taking jobs away from black teachers. Inveighing against "school reform liberalism", they claimed that "people who are self-consciously anti-racist construct self-justification through demonization." For Dr. Spears, "privatization" was not something perpetrated by neoconservatives or Republicans alone. Rather he believes that white conservatives and liberals both support charter schools because of their shared images of "bad teachers" and a failed school system. Dr. Spears believed that the logic of the bad teacher myth in New Orleans is inherently racialized, a product of "white supremacy", and says that according to the ideology of school reformers, "the worst thing that ever happened to black children was black adults". The failure of these teachers is not just about pedagogy but implies a failed racialized stewardship shared with black parents and perhaps unions and

politicians as well. Thus, the "bad teacher" can be read as a metonym for a failed black public sphere post Jim Crow.[16]

There were also more technocratic and ostensible race neutral takes on teachers working capacities before Act 35. Ash, at the time a researcher at a New Orleans based education think-tank, expressed sympathy for the teachers who were fired, claiming that they were "products of the system", but that they were not willing to work the hours or display the flexibility which new teachers, like Teach for America corps members were. The new "talent" in the city was on a "different level professionally," and "bottom line, scores are up." Dee, an RSD employee and community organizer, claimed that bad teachers were "like a virus infecting others", which perhaps acts as a justification for the replacement or quarantining of the "bad teacher" from kids. While conservative and neoliberal ideologues have used the morally charged term "bad teacher" directly, those working in non-profits and the school level preferred a more technocratic and sympathetic language of skill gaps and talent insufficiencies, referring to the inability of veteran teachers to pass skills exams, turn in resumes without typos, or respond to digital correspondence in a timely fashion. These accounts render veteran teachers as victims of their own system, sympathetic but incapable subjects. While this language may seem more objective and value neutral, it too is subject to ideology, as some have contested that there is actually not a solid research base for judging school performance pre-Katrina that controls for demographic factors and the changes in funding and population that have occurred after the storm (Harris 2013).

These conceptions of veteran teachers before the storm were challenged by Dr. Freeman, a former principal, who claimed that there was "no evidence" for lazy teachers and furthermore

[16] Krugman (2015) has pointed to research that shows how Americans identify the welfare state with African Americans.

challenged the basis of work ethic as a suitable critique. He questioned both the equation of working hard with progress and the ability of charter school advocates to claim that their teachers somehow worked harder than veteran teachers from before Act 35. In *The Garden Path,* a novel on post-Katrina school reform by former charter CEO and education professor Andre Perry, a veteran black teacher working at a charter school notices the longer work hours of younger white colleagues and "worried that Crescent City students would mistake work hours with work ethic" (Perry 2010). The subject of work hours will be analyzed in depth in chapter 2, but for now, we should note that of the primary markers used to differentiate bad/veteran teachers from talent is work hours, or more specifically the willingness to work long hours without restriction from family or community commitments, much less the desire to limit one's working week to a reasonable amount. In explaining the efficacy of the bad teacher myth, both Dr. Spears and Dr. Styles, who had never met each other, claimed that the myth drew power from "white people's biggest fear", that white tax dollars might go to a black person who "hadn't earned it". In the political economy of New Orleans the "bad teacher" can index profound fears that the state, which is properly owned by white people, has been infected by undeserving black subjects. Unlike the welfare mother or their criminalized children however, the "bad teacher" poses that the state is not just being leeched by spooks; rather the state itself has become the succubus.

The "bad teacher" as it operates in New Orleans attaches to raced, classed, and gendered specters as well as memories of specific teachers. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) calls these characters of the welfare recipient, the mammy, and the matriarch "controlling images" which help to justify the oppression of black women. Melissa Harris Perry (2011) cites the work of political scientist Martin Gilens (2000) and feminist theorist Ange-Marie Hancock (2004) to

make the point that white attitudes about welfare policy are influenced by stereotypes about the work ethic and sexuality of black women and their inability to control black children. These attitudes and images have been exploited by politicians and intellectuals in part of an effort to dismantle the welfare state (Macek 2006). Adolph Reed echoes these observations when discussing myths of the underclass.[17] The bad teacher stereotype articulates to these controlling stereotypes by setting up veteran black educators as both victims and perpetrators of black pathology. This is significant, because a class which was in part responsible for the management of deviance has been cast as deviant themselves. Under the rubric of ethics, results, or talent, veteran teachers have been derided for not conforming to changing professional norms. However, rather than only defend whether or not veteran teachers were "really" good or bad, effective or ineffective, we should refuse the trap of deviance (Cohen 2005) and become suspicious of the framework of evaluation itself. This refusal can be a potent intellectual maneuver, but we should never forget that it also exists within the repertoire of blackness as a political force and identity, in the sense evoked by Fred Moten (Harney and Moten 2013).

Finding New Talent

What kind of teachers did CMO's, the RSD, and education non-profits imagine they needed when they began re-opening and expanding schools in the years after Hurricane Katrina? While the dominant image may be the young white female transplants from elite colleges provided by alternative certification organizations, the picture on the ground is a more complicated. According to Buras (2015), by 2011, black teachers comprised 50 percent of teachers in charters, down from 75 percent, and white teachers were 46 percent of the workforce,

[17] "In the end, underclass assumptions serve to take the focus away from (costly) demands for responsible government policies, blaming poor people, not societal choices, for another pat phrase, "persistent poverty" (Reed 1999, 179)

up from 24 percent. 40 percent of teachers had three years or less experience. However, the hiring profiles at New Orleans charter schools are highly stratified, with some "no excuses" style charters relying heavily on the stereotypical transplant recruit, and other networks having more mixed faculty. Furthermore, TFA has begun to recruit significantly more racially diverse and local corps members, changing the racial contours of how talent gets defined. Every network and non-profit has particular interests and processes which shape their conceptions of who they want in their school building and how to find them. In the following, I highlight some of the dynamics which shape this process, focusing in particular on the themes of mindsets, fit, and selective inclusion.

In recent decades across diverse industries firms have begun to value talent over experience when making hiring and retention decisions (Urciouli 2008) and this shift can be seen in the hiring practices of several New Orleans CMO's. Kerry, the CEO of a "no excuses" like CMO, told me that when hiring, "we are flexible on technical skills". Kerry believes that technical skills can be coached and developed, but that "mindsets" are fundamental indicators of a potential hire's success on the team. Kerry brings in potential hires to conduct sample lessons with students and then gives the applicants what they conceive of as withering and honest feedback. The applicant is then invited to reflect on the feedback and incorporate it into a subsequent sample lesson, being tested on the changes they make. Showing "grit" and receptiveness to feedback throughout this rigorous interview process is more important than accumulated qualifications. During the hiring process, Kerry and the team give all the info they can, positive and critical, and leave it up to the applicant to decide if their school is the kind of place they could envision working at. The school leaders sometimes take the time to see how the

applicant interacts with their potential colleagues by taking them to dinner. Jamie, a principal at another school, wants people who are going to "do the work".

Talent manifests in multiple registers in the hiring process, combining pedigree, perseverance, potential, and performance of recognizable social cues. One of the ironies of the human capital regimes of charter networks is that while they aspire to create a system for universalizable, scalable, and portable judgment of talent, their actual practices are highly ritualized, particular, and provincial. Walker, a human capital manager at a charter management organization described some of the ways that veteran educators are disqualified during the hiring process,

> Like anyone, we want to hire locally. Unfortunately we see the legacy of a bad education system, where sometimes the applicant pool from local educators that are older, over 40… if I were to pull up their resumes, there's going to be more than one spelling error, there would be a lack of urgency or responsiveness to requests or trouble uploading resumes. We moved to an online video platform. I have seen a lot of older applicants that continually say they struggle with that. We need people to be technologically savvy in order to work well and be efficient… Unfortunately, I think that's a legacy of a bad education system.

While dominant professional culture recognizes these norms as standard indications of professionalism, even the expectations around technology can be shown to be cultural arbitraries. These standards and rituals lead to black educators who are recognized interpersonally as quality staff to have difficulty securing positions and promotions. Hayden, a hiring manager at another CMO discussed this in terms of promoting career pathways for support staff who are disproportionately black and local,

> I don't think schools have thought about it (*using support staff as a diversity pipeline*) deliberately. It's just how it falls out. I applaud TFA and Teach Nola, the second more so. They're definitely making a conscious push to make support staff into classroom teachers. One of our best teachers at Ashe was a para though, and she didn't get in to Teach Nola twice. I worked part time at Teach Nola, and one of our principals called me

> and asked how I could help her get in… I work with her, but she's just a terrible interviewer, it's just not something she's good at.

While the bad teacher helps to justify the mass firing of Act 35, it is this kind of sympathetic and pathologizing essentialism of cultural difference which vexes reformers and excludes many black and veteran educators.

The cultural performances entailed in tests of mindsets invite subjectivity into the hiring process in ways that collectively bargained contracts were designed to mitigate and some reformers recognize this as an ongoing problem in the current human capital space. Toni, an education non-profit executive portrayed this as a difficulty endemic to human nature,

> If you're a person who is not from New Orleans, who has come here and knows the schools were terrible and you're starting a charter school and you have someone from OPSB who is a former OPSB teacher who comes to you and didn't go to a prestigious university and comes and applies to you for a job and you have someone who went to Princeton and taught for two years in St. Bernard Parish and all over their resume are the performance gains that they had with their kids and you yourself went to Penn or something, it becomes hard to make that decision. Just as if you worked in the old system and you know the nuances of what schools were good and what weren't and you have people you can ask for reference checks on folks who come to apply for you, you look at the resume of the guy who's not from New Orleans, and you're like why would I hire that person when I have this person who has been teacher for fifteen years, and that exacerbates the segregation issue.

Toni asserts that both traditional and charter school models are imbricated within social norms which privilege culturally arbitrary connections. Their concern about the persistence of network effects in charter school hiring demonstrates the illusory nature of the tabula rasa of reform.

Mindsets are one of the primary ways school leaders decide if someone is a "culture fit" at a school. Many principals don't necessarily have the resources to conduct such an extensive interview process as Kerry can, but that nevertheless, fit is one of the primary attributes they look for as they recruit and retain teachers. Casey, a principal at another "no excuses" school, told me that "even excellent teachers" have had to leave their school because they did not fit in on the

team. While fit was often characterized in terms of positive attitude, work ethic, and team orientation by school leaders I spoke to, teachers also expressed frustrations that indicate it also meant adherence to management imperatives, group rituals, and a willingness to prioritize work time above other commitments. Being willing to spend time at school was perhaps the single most apparent indicator of fit. Hayden said that they would "love to hire more veteran teachers" but that veterans often asked very direct questions about when school dismissed. Hayden continued,

> I don't believe there's a teacher shortage in the area. One of the reasons some of the veteran teachers aren't choosing to stay here is that mindset as well… The charter schools ask a lot more… Connecting back to that veteran school base of staff that's available out there…. When I've had conversations, a lot of them will ask, "well, what's the school day?" And I tell them and they say "oh yeah yeah, sure…I'll be interested or apply", and I know that's a big factor, that previous way of operating in the school system. The biggest challenge is just having that mindset. It's more common among the TFA world because we got six weeks of teacher training with a constant sense of urgency. Those of us who got placed into charter schools, it was like a continuation, where it's not uncommon to put in 10-12 hours a day. Someone who was like, yeah my day used to be 8:30-2:30, 3:30, depending on when the kids would leave. It's tough to say, hey we need you to come in earlier, we need you to stay later. In addition to that, we need you to cover lunch and do advisory.

Here we see that fit is more than just a metric for management. It is also an additional affective labor and burden placed on teachers as workers, demonstrating vividly the ways that, like other service workers in neoliberal economies (Leidner 1993), teachers are compelled to not only get results, but also cultivate their own capacities as "human capital".

While this focus on mindsets and fit might seem to lend itself to excluding all but young transplants without connections to community or family that can work seemingly unlimited hours, I found that the school leaders I observed to be moving away from a sole reliance on that kind of recruit. School leaders I interviewed at charter schools with higher test scores and reputations shied away from hiring first year alternatively certified teachers if they could, even

though most of them started their own careers with Teach for America. They preferred to hire TFA alumni who had been seasoned already at other, more "dysfunctional" schools. Kerry in particular, spoke of one TFA alumni hire who was so glad to be leaving a school that wasn't a "shitshow" that they were very enthusiastic participants in team culture the following year. TFA itself is recruiting significantly more corps members of color and from New Orleans. I attended the orientation for a local program designed to train school leaders of color in the style of the Broad Residency. Participants spoke freely and honestly about the ways in which they felt they and their colleagues of color had experienced glass ceilings within the charter landscape, exchanging knowing nods and exclamations at the mention of dean of discipline as the defining limiting role, but they nevertheless remained committed to navigating leadership pathways within charter schools, if only out of necessity. Current school leaders uniformly proclaimed their commitment to "diversity" though their mechanisms for pursuing it were more constrained than TFA and other non-profits. Hayden told me, "Look, the perfect candidate is going to be a young, black male from New Orleans who teaches math," before lamenting the ostensible rarity of such a subject.

Hayden continued to define the problem of teacher diversity in terms of scarcity,

> Our biggest source for them is TFA and Teach Nola. Leaders tell me all the time, I need teachers like this (black). But I can't send an email to TFA saying I need to see all your black corps members. We can say, we want to grow the diversity of our school, please help us with that with your candidates. I know Xavier has a school of Ed, but our challenge is we don't hire first year teachers out of traditional ed schools. We feel that TFA and TN prep better for our type of classroom and our settings. Dillard doesn't have an ed program. It's a tough talent pool coming in. I've watched teachers from ed programs and making lateral moves get declined by our schools for not meeting what they're looking for as far as the deliverables in the classroom. They met what they were looking for in terms of this is a black male in front of the classroom, discipline seems to be fine… but not that great of a teacher. Usually they decide to not go with that person because we don't have the capacity to support or develop them the way we'd like, or we do have pretty good teacher development, but we're determining that we're not going to

> help this person become the kind of teacher we need them to be. (rush transcript, redo next draft)

The hiring practices of charter schools in New Orleans should be thought of as selectively inclusive, rather than absolutely exclusive at this point. This selective inclusion should be thought of as an uneven contest over the racialized character of the educator class in New Orleans. Black and other educators of color who are engaging with charter schools in various capacities are not merely secondary accomplices to reform agendas, but have their own pedagogical and political visions which are constrained and compromised by the current environment.[18] In the early years of reform after Katrina, young white transplants were seen as more able to do the kind of affective and cultural signaling of fit, flexibility, and talent, but there is no reason to think that black and local teachers cannot learn these skills and that education reform cannot develop more sophisticated politics of recognition. While transplant teachers are at times criticized for being less experienced and less expensive than veteran teachers and accused of being less effective, we must recognize them not as "de-skilled" labor, but "re-skilled" labor. This re-skilling of the teacher around new demands for affect, self-cultivation, and work discipline is another force of atomization and theatre of racecraft.

Ambivalent Talent

Transplanted white educators are not passive wearers of the mantle of talent. They engage in their own ambivalent and racialized "interpretive labor" (Hartigan 2005) about the ways they are posed as both different kinds of laboring and ethical subjects. In order to get a better sense of who these newer "good" teachers were in contrast to the figurations of bad teachers and veteran teachers I spent time with and interviewed many young Teach for America

[18] Further attention to the ways that local educators of color compromise with reform would give us great insight into the complexity of the racialization of education work.

corps members of diverse backgrounds, exploring the ways they articulate their own relationships to the politics and ethics of race, labor, and care in post-Katrina school reform.

I sat with Val on a hot but rainy day at a café uptown near Tulane University. I met her at one of the UTNO racial healing circle meetings and was intrigued to find out more about her perspectives on coming in as a new teacher after Act 35 and as part of a small proportion who actively sought out relationships with veteran teachers and the teachers union. Before coming to New Orleans, Val was excited to find out more about the education scene in the city but had heard criticisms. Val exchanged emails with a professor of education about their potential to help and recounted the correspondence to me,

> He told me that I shouldn't come, that I was doing harm and taking a job away from a black teacher. I still came, but I was really freaked out by that email. How could someone think that about me? I had good intentions! I didn't know about the firings until I actually moved here.

Val understood that they were entering an ethically fraught arena by taking a teaching job in New Orleans though they were aware of many of the details until sometime after arriving. They nevertheless felt sufficiently committed (in both the active and passive sense) to help that they took the position anyway.

Despite the concerns raised by the email exchange Val claimed that they actually found their greatest network of support with veteran teachers at the teachers' union offices. Val was unsure whether they were going to continue in New Orleans after the two year commitment, "I think about going back to my hometown. I'm not sure if New Orleans is where I belong... Sometimes I want to teach at my neighborhood school". Val is deeply conflicted about their place in the reform landscape, uncertain of their effectiveness, claiming the way they has been told to teach contradicts the way they learned growing up in "good schools". The experience

both with the ethical dilemmas of being a young white teacher who has "replaced" veteran black teachers and the relationships they have built with some of those very same teachers has led them to question the very meaning of racialized belonging to which they feel both attachment and ambivalence.

Jessie, another young transplant teacher, also asked the question "whose job am I replacing?" However, our discussion focused more on the conditions of labor they experienced as a first year teacher at a charter school. Jessie admitted that, like many first year teachers, they had a difficult time adjusting to the rigors of the profession. Jessie "thought about quitting all the time," even going so far as to rehearse the speech they would give to the principal. After learning more about the history of teachers in New Orleans from engagements with veteran teachers, Jessie admitted to being "angry" because they were "cheaper." For Jessie, being a good teacher was not just defined along the metrics of learning outcomes but also upon the character of their labor,

> I was discouraged by my principal and by TFA from associating with the teachers union and advocating for labor rights… My principal was patronizing to me; he claimed that I was too busy to go to board meetings. I always felt belittled and disempowered… It goes into this martyrdom complex of serving disadvantaged communities…

Jessie felt that what made them a good teacher was the willingness to work hard and comply with the administration. While Jessie and other talent were valorized for being the "best and the brightest", they questioned whether they were really a good or even better teacher saying, "Who am I to say I know better?" Nathaniel Lacour has criticized this "self-sacrificing" ethic of new teachers in New Orleans, claiming that it individualizes teachers in a way that undermines labor

solidarity (Democracy Now 2007). Talent is here a rubric for both exalting and undermining teachers as laboring subjects, inviting both ambivalence and paranoia.[19]

We have to be wary of these associations between fetishized capacities and work ethics, particularly when there are such racial disparities between groups. However, the point is not only that black women have been demonized, but to examine their demonization in connection to the ethical encounters produced by their termination and replacement by mostly young white teachers. Listening to the reflections of Val and Jessie we can see that the role of talent itself is subject to marginalization and ethical dilemmas in the way it serves as a vehicle for the transformation of the teaching profession. Andre Perry examines these teachers in a chapter titled "Haunted Schools" (Perry 2010). The students in the novel describe the white teachers who stay on campus through the night hours as "ghosts" haunting the school. Their principal, described as a Wall St. type from Harvard, "wanted a different type of teacher" and claimed that "the quickest, most efficient way to turn around a failing school is to exchange the human capital". In contrast to the caring labors and communal connections discussed earlier in the paper the good teacher comes to be increasingly defined not by the quality of their relationships but by the quantity of their labor and outputs. The quantification and exchangeability of such a status as human capital perhaps accounts for the ambivalence teachers like Jessie and Val feel towards their place in school reform efforts. The changing character of teaching as labor in a charter school and the material and institutional dislocations of reform after Act 35 seems to hamper their ability to form the quality of relationships that would enable them to continue in a caring and ethical manner.

[19] Ho (2009) examines these conditions of labor as human capital among Wall St. financial workers. One way that the "market model" is an apt metaphor for charter school reforms is the similarity in labor subjectivities between teachers as talent and Wall St. workers as human capital.

So where does this ambivalence and interpretive labor lead? While Jessie and Val are clearer about their discomfort with the political contradictions of reform, even pro-charter organizations are increasingly recognizing the fraught terrain they operate within. There is no organized mass movement of transplant educators in alliance with veterans. Knowledge of contradictions doesn't necessarily lead to resistance and there are many teachers who continue to work in schools with "partial penetrations" and critiques (Willis 1981). This is because the modes of reconstruction that even many critical educators operate within work within frameworks of individual responsibility and repsonsibilization. As with the immediate reconstruction efforts (Adams 2013), help and care are matters of private ethics and voluntarism and in the face of the inadequacies and contradictions of reconstruction and reform, subjects look to individual self-mastery and cultivation of human capital in progressive and neoliberal modes and collective action is eroded.

Conclusion

Like the "underclass" that formed a discursive weapon for decades of neglect and disinvestment in the welfare state, the "bad teacher" doesn't really exist in identifiable somatic units. Yes, before and after Katrina, there were and are teachers that do not serve students adequately and they should be of concern to us all. However, the process of making distinctions between bad or ineffective teachers and good or talented teachers are ideological and includes terms of evaluation that far exceed measures of classroom effectiveness. Ultimately these distinctions better serve us as maps to values and politics than guides to effective school practice.

Discourses of teacher quality present us with a framework of debate with two concerning restrictions. First, they locate judgements of educators within individualizing frameworks. This

atomization is significant in how it aligns with broader political and economic shifts from social responsibility to individual responsibility and it encourages educators, progressive and neoliberal, to respond to the dilemmas of schooling with individualistic strategies of self-cultivation. Second, teacher quality discourses don't merely affect racial groups in unequal ways, they generate and reproduce racecraft. The danger of responding to bad teacher myths only in terms of quality, either by defending veteran teachers or questioning the quality of transplants, is that of a flat-footed identity politics. While racial and indigenous groupings may have aligned in a particular configuration of support, opposition, or participation vis-à-vis charter schools in the immediate aftermath of Katrina, debates over teacher quality, talent pipelines, diversity, and recognition are all crucibles within which new configurations of racial and local identity can be forged with different relationships to the projects of charter schools and their reconfigurations of teaching labor.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM WITH TEACHING AS WORK

Over the course of thirteen months of fieldwork I observed teachers at six K-12 schools in four different charter school networks and all of them could be fairly characterized as following a No Excuses style approach to school discipline, testing accountability, and "human capital" strategies. Most days I popped in and out of individual teacher's classrooms at various points of the school day, sitting in an unobtrusive corner of the classroom quietly taking notes, sometimes working with students during individual and group work sessions and once a week listening in on professional development sessions where teachers worked on lesson plans, reflected on collective goals, and prepared for upcoming standardized tests. Every couple of weeks, on average, I shadowed a teacher or administrator for an entire working day, arriving at school when they did and staying with them until they walked to their cars to leave the building. These full day observations were grueling marathons, almost always starting before 7:00 am and ending after 5:00 or 6:00 pm. Teachers would typically arrive thirty minutes to an hour before students, using the calm before the storm to make copies, organize the classroom, or attend brief daily morning staff meetings which school leaders used to check in with staff and build morale. Teachers would then spend most of the rest of the day with their students with brief breaks for lunch, recess, or elective classes where students would be handed off to another teacher. School leaders spent much of the day observing teachers in classrooms, meeting with teachers and other administrators individually and collectively, or attending to students who had been sent out from classrooms for disciplinary infractions. Teachers and school leaders would both typically stay after school (somewhere between 3:00 – 5:00 pm) to finish planning for the coming days and

weeks. Almost every teacher or administrator I spoke with claimed to work at a half day or more every weekend lesson planning, grading, or speaking with parents, amongst other tasks.

All of these are activities that teachers at any kind of school would be familiar with. However, teachers and school leaders at charter schools narrate their working day as though they shoulder more of these burdens than educators at other kinds of schools. As noted in the previous chapter, one of the ways that school leaders, "human capital managers", and teachers at charter schools distinguish the talent they seek for their organizations from veteran teachers of traditional public schools is by the hours they put in. *Talent* at charter schools ostensibly do not ask hiring committees when school lets out because they are willing to work as long as the working day goes. I'm familiar with these emphases on an extended working day, having worked as a teacher at a charter school where the official school day ended at 5:00 pm, but my principal reminded us that we worked at a place where people aren't rushing to clock out at 5:01. Every day I wondered, how long before I can leave the premises without causing gossip or disapproval? Is 5:15 too early? Maybe I should wait until 5:32? You should never leave on a nice round number, lest it appear that your egress was planned with malice aforethought.

This anxious preoccupation with time is not limited to my own experience or solely concerned with clocking out. Marion, a young transplant, described to me his disgust at the kinds of status games teachers would play to be seen as the hardest working. "People will park their cars in strategic spots where they'll be seen. You can be in the building twiddling your thumbs, but as long as your car is there, you're a hard worker. When you're leaving and you pass someone's car who is still there it's like, fuck, I'm not as good a teacher as they are." Of course, school faculties in all kinds of places are subject to status games, but in New Orleans the focus on intense and exclusive commitment is notable. Youthful transplants often have no other local

social ties to command their attention, and thus the approval of their colleagues takes on even greater importance.

Employees at charter schools are under intense pressure and school leaders are constantly strategizing about how to best support teachers to execute under these conditions. During the August of 2014, I observed professional development for the start of the school term following my year of fieldwork at two charter school networks that both turned to the same solution for helping their teachers to negotiate the demands of the working day. These professional development sessions were mostly comprised of programming facilitated by school leaders and veteran teachers to help the staff plan for upcoming lessons, strategize about classroom management and discipline, or discuss human resources issues like changing healthcare plans. However, sometimes schools would bring in outside consultants. That summer, two of the networks I had followed over the course of the year brought in a consultant with a program designed to provide teachers with an organizational system and philosophy for working efficiently and saving time.

This program was founded by a former teacher and executive in education non-profits. I was able to sit in on one of these sessions as the founder introduced the program and set forth an enticing aspiration for the room full of over 150 teachers from across the charter school network's schools. Early in the session, the facilitator, equipped with a microphone headset and a no-nonsense tone, asked the room, "Why is togetherness important?" The teachers in the room ventured various responses, sharing a theme of being able to handle all the responsibilities of teaching in a high stakes charter school environment. The facilitator underscores the importance of proper planning for sustaining the efforts and energies of the teachers in the room, saying she

is “really, really worried about burnout and planning is probably about fifty percent of that”. The official literature for the Together Teacher states,

> Effective teaching and leadership require strong planning, sharp time and task management skills, and durable organizational systems. Without a clear method to sort through the daily deluge, it’s easy to lose sight of what you need to accomplish in your classroom or office. The cost of not having a plan is enormous: Your students and colleagues suffer, you sleep too little, and you all feel overwhelmed. Thankfully, with some intentionality, routines, and habits, it is possible to be an effective professional—and have a life!

The vision of the teacher that has it together promises much. It reminds the collected educators in the room that time is a scarce resource and that the stakes of inefficient labors are not only lessened capacities and availabilities for life sustaining and replenishing activities, but also diminished value for students and colleagues.

This aspiration differs from Taylorist designs on increasing worker efficiency by emphasizing the personal nature of the work that teachers do. The facilitator reminds the audience that “you love your work”. In an official testimonial, a school leader writes,

> (The facilitator’s) personal management systems and her work with our senior and middle leaders to customize these systems to their own personal styles has significantly improved the quality of their lives. They feel more organized and more productive, using practices learned from (the facilitator’s) workshops to steadily make progress towards their big goals while effectively handling the daily deluge of details.

The facilitator encourages the audience to eschew the dichotomy of “work-life balance” and consider “blending… personal and professional together,” noting that “about 10% of you will refuse to blend,” betraying a focus tested sensibility of educator tendencies. This articulation of the personal and the professional takes the emotional labor that service industries have developed over the past thirty years (Leidner 1993) a step further and poses that the organization systems of

a together teacher can be a desirable way to structure one's life in off hours that are no longer strictly "outside" the working day.

While this blending could sound oppressive in the abstract, the Together Teacher quotes teacher testimonials that describe it in alluring and relieving terms,

> The principles I have learned this year from Together Teacher have helped me keep it all together in a really busy time. Since February, I have sold a condo, bought a house, moved, and started construction on the new house, all while working full time as a teacher/coordinator and teaching 2 nights a week in addition to my day job. By using my Comprehensive Calendar and my Upcoming To-Do list (I actually have it divided into 4 lists), I have been able to keep it all together! The Together Teacher principles can be applied to many areas of life. I am so grateful that The Together Teacher came into my life! Thank you for all you do to help us stay organized.

While the facilitator surmises that 10% of teachers will reject these aspirations, they have a hunch that the other 90% will find the idea of keeping it together not only an attractive option for working, but also living. Charter schools and education reformers like to emphasize the ways they are trying to elevate teaching as a profession, often using examples of collaboration, pay, and expertise as justifications for increasing demands and the dissolution of teachers unions. When I interviewed for my job teaching at a No Excuses charter school in New York in 2008, they told me it would be more like working at a high-powered law firm than a traditional public school. These attempts to make teaching more like a "profession" than a "job" certainly entail a great deal of recalibrating of the work day and organizational structures and cultures. However, in the "neoliberal era" professions and professionalism have been marked by discourses of "loving your job" and the rise of the "creative class". As much as these affective orientations to work represent desires to counter alienation in the labor process, they also invite the colonization of the working person's inner life and subjectivity by work. In addition to the aforementioned

means, the synchronization and blurring of work and life is one of the primary ways that charter school reform "professionalizes" teaching.

Across many interviews, teachers and administrators at the schools I observed discussed their long working hours as both a celebration of their commitment to students and cause for concern of the sustainability of teachers in the face of burnout. However, the Together Teacher model should alert us to the possibility that the organization of the working day is about more than quantities of time or expenditures of energy. Indeed, teachers at all kinds of schools work long hours, even if not in ways that are recognizable or rewarded in charter school environments.[1] Members of the American Federation of Teachers Local 527, the New Orleans Teachers Union, would argue that they have worked for many years to raise the professional standards of teachers and that their members have been just as hard working and committed as teachers working in charter schools. What is distinctive about working in charter school if it is not the number of hours worked, the professional standards of the workplace, or the intensity with which teachers and school leaders pursue their labors? To explore this question, we have to apprehend *work* as something more than mere activity. I suggest following a lineage from Marx to contemporary Marxist feminisms as one way to understand work as a set of contingent and experimental assemblages that organize activity, exchange, and transformations in value. In this chapter I argue that it is charter schools' commitment to a particular vision of work as professionalism which distinguishes them from other types of schooling. Furthermore, I argue that the "emotional labor regimes" (Freeman 2014) of No Excuses charter schools are in part responsible for the relative repulsion of black teachers from their working environments. By

[1] The average teacher working day is 10 hours and 40 minutes according to the Gates Foundation (2012). The UFT also post limits to the working day in its "Know Your Rights" section of its website, but such limits are skirted in practice, frequently.

blending the personal and the professional, these labor regimes introduce racialized norms of fitting in that work to exclude teachers who don't conform to recognized practices of collaboration, organization, and positivity.

In the remainder of the chapter, I will pursue this argument by examining three key aspects of the intensification of teaching as work under New Orleans charter school reforms. In the first section, I will reflect on Marx's theorization of the working day before scrutinizing the meaning of the working day and youthfulness in my field sites. Second, I will use Kathi Week's postwork reflections on the work ethic as an entrée into unpacking discourses of professionalism and alienation among charter school teachers. Finally, I will use Carla Freeman's concept of the "emotional labor regime" to frame a discussion of positivity and the racialization of fit in hiring and workplace culture. Together, these examples will show us how charter schools should be distinguished not by the ways that their teachers and school leaders may work more, but in the ways that they are more committed to work.

The Working Day

The length of any given working day can seem self-evident and mundane. School days in particular are familiar to the vast majority of us who have attended public schools, but the schedule and shape of a teacher's working day is the outcome of many struggles over many years (Apple 1986, Spring 2011). At traditional public schools operating under union contracts, the limits of teachers working hours are strictly delimited. In the "Know Your Rights" section of the United Federation of Teachers website, it states that the school day is to be no longer than six hours and twenty minutes. The length of professional development sessions and sessions for parent engagement in addition to these instructional hours are likewise explicitly enumerated.

What duties teachers can be asked to perform during lunch or before or after school are listed as well as compensation for overtime work. The key difference between charter schools in New Orleans and the traditional public schools that preceded them vis a vis the working day is that, save a few schools that have recently voted to unionize, teachers are at-will employees whose working day is undefined. Charter school teachers are not just asked to work more hours than teachers at traditional public schools, they are compelled to be flexible in ways their counterparts are not, taking on duties and responsibilities without extra compensation.

However, charter school teachers do not work simply at the whim of school leaders. They shape and contest the working day, even if in highly individualized forms distinct from collective bargaining. By changing the shape of the working day, charter schools open up a field of politics in the school as workplace which can be better comprehended by calling upon Karl Marx's theorization of the working day in chapter 10 of *Capital, Volume 1*. It might seem odd to use Marx's theoretical and historical account of the development of the working day under industrializing capitalism as a model for thinking through the working lives of teachers. After all, teachers don't make or sell any particular kind of product and school leaders don't engage in anything like what we would normally consider a marketplace. However, according to Marx, what distinguished capitalism from other forms of political economy is not the way in which products are made or circulated in the market, but its particular and peculiar means of organizing labor and transforming value (Marx 1990). Keeping in mind Weber's Protestant ethic (1958) as well, it is plausible to claim that certain ethics and social forms can become detached from their ordinary contexts and evolve in new ways over time and place. Work under capitalism is a provincial assemblage of forms of organization, labor, value, belief, ideology, ethics, etc. and the history of public schooling in the United States clearly shows a tendency towards organizing

teachers ever more intensely as workers and professionals. Furthermore, teachers do produce value in the key role they play in the maintenance of Ideological State Apparatuses, in that schools are one of the primary institutions in which societies "reproduce the relations of production" (Althusser 1994). Insofar as teachers are workers, with charter school teachers in particular being subject to intensifying professionalization and precarity, they are engaged in struggles over the working day.

For Marx, "the working day is… capable of being determined, but in and for itself indeterminate" (1990). The working day can be quantified in time or expenditure of labor or reckoned in terms of the value produced in a given term, but it cannot be reduced to these measurements. The working day is a fault line between the needs of the worker to labor in sufficient quantity to reproduce themselves and their labor-power and the compulsion of the capitalist to extract surplus value from the labor time over and above the former threshold. These imperatives form a core contradiction within the working day, they are "an antinomy, of right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchange. Between equal rights, force decides. Hence, in the history of capitalist production, the establishment of a norm for the working day presents itself as a struggle over the limits of that day, a struggle between collective capital, i.e. the class of capitalists, and collective labour, i.e. the working class." Through decades of organizing, the United Teachers of New Orleans, AFT Local 527, had won the right to certain limitations on the working day, amongst other concessions (Fairclough 1995). The force of Hurricane Katrina, the levee failures, and above all the organizing of pro-charter school policymakers wiped away this détente and instituted a new set of norms around an extended and indeterminate working day. Charter schools have expanded in many other districts across the country, but nowhere on the scale of New Orleans, in part because of the coercive actions of the

state in dissolving the traditional public school system and the base for the teachers union, a kind of primitive accumulation – "the pretensions of capital in its embryonic state, in its state of becoming, when it cannot yet use the sheer force of economic relations to secure its right to absorb a sufficient quantity of surplus labour, but must be aided by the power of the state" (Marx 1990). It would be hard to imagine such a widespread change to the working day without the coercive force of the post-Katrina maneuvering of education reformers.

Among teachers in my field site, it was commonplace to regard a ten-plus hour work day as normal. Nora, an elementary school teacher, told me she arrived at school "around 6:45" and stayed "until 5:00 most days". Nora also typically worked one day on the weekend and if she didn't "do enough on the weekend, then I work until 7:00 pm on Monday and Tuesday". Rob, another teacher at Nora's school, arrived at school around 6:30 am, an hour before students in order to prepare and worked all day on Sundays in order to submit lesson plans to school leaders due that evening. Rob said "I try to get 6 hours of sleep every night". Jay, a teacher at another elementary school, left the job at the end of the school year because the job required "too much of my time", saying that if the job was a "9-5, that would be one thing, but I'm working 10 hours a day at least." When teachers complained of exhaustion from the long hours they either speculated about leaving for another position or turned towards strategies of self-care, such as treating oneself to a vacation or massage, or something as simple as watching a favorite television program before going to sleep. When teachers were let out early from a professional development session, or in the case of Nora and Rob's school, when the principal announced that the following year, the school term would end a week early, these concessions were framed as gifts of time to teachers rather than concessions or compromises.

Teachers may have been exhausted, or displeased when particular activities were deemed a waste of time, but they mostly took for granted the extended and flexible nature of the working day, evoking Marx,

> The history of the regulation of the working day in certain branches of production, and the struggle still going on in others over this regulation, prove conclusively that the isolated worker, the worker as 'free' seller of his labour-power, succumbs without resistance once capitalist production has reached a certain stage of maturity. The establishment of a normal working day is therefore the product of a protracted and more or less concealed civil war between the capitalist class and the working class (1990).

As noted in chapter 1, while charter schools value "teamwork", "collaboration", and "fit", they do so under models of subjectivity which isolate and atomize teachers as a class of workers. In the face of the exacting demands of the charter school environment, teachers were mostly only capable of accommodation, escape, or self-mastery.

What is it that drives the administration at typical New Orleans charter schools to push for such an extended working day and why do teachers at these schools seem willing to accept these working hours, even to the point of exhaustion? It should not be forgotten that these schools are not a model for public schools in general, but for public schools in low-income, typically urban districts serving highly segregated populations of black students and communities in the case of New Orleans, New York City, and Detroit, and Latinx populations in cities like Los Angeles, Miami, and Houston to cite some of the cities with the largest concentrations of charter schools, by share and by absolute number (Details from the Dashboard 2012). New Orleans is a city that as of 2016, was roughly 60% black, 30% white, 5% Latinx, and 3% Asian, yet charter schools in the city were 86% black, 8% white, 3% Latinx, and 2% Asian. Nearly a quarter of school age children in the city attend private school, meaning that most white students effectively go to school in entirely separate privatized system anyway.

At each of the schools I observed as well as various education non-profits, educators regularly made reference to “these kids” to index the profound social inequities that faced the predominately low-income black students in New Orleans public schools. This linguistic marker was used in many different ways, each underscoring the ostensibly tremendous need this population had for education based interventions. While the deficits of “these kids” could be enumerated in the language of “the achievement gap” whereby black students faced persistent test score gaps with white children, “these kids” ultimately refers to an indeterminate source of value. Riley, a former teacher and education entrepreneur profiled in chapters 3 and 4, attempted to found a school using “design thinking” models because “Public education is not creating a way out for kids like we need it to be… We have to figure out how to serve these kids in different ways." However much “these kids” can be used to justify alternative approaches to schooling based in audit cultures, this discourse also bears the mark of culturally arbitrary impositions. Annalise, who has worked to develop a therapeutic school model counter to a No Excuses approach, felt that “these kids” serves as a vector for white elitism, claiming, “The underlying thing is there are people who believe that white people are simply better role models period. So these kids need to see how white people walk, talk, and interact with each other. You need to see how I act, because being like you is not the definition of success.” However it is used in education reform, “these kids” and the work that is done for them are the insatiable coin of the realm.

The working day of the charter school isn’t extended because principals and network executives are domineering people who personally profit from the exertions of their teachers. Rather a combination of the discursive framing of the needs of “these kids” and the audit cultures of test-based accountability structures and charter school contracts with districts work to produce

an impersonal drive for producing results, most acutely in the form of increased test scores and school performance scores, which also at times includes measures like attendance, graduation, and year to year growth and also narratives of success which manifest in school visits, websites and promotional materials and grant applications for foundation funding. Because these measures are predicated upon growth over time, and many charter school networks seek to grow to manage more schools by proving their competency in the current sites, there exists an incentive for a "boundless and ruthless extension of the working day" (Marx 1990). It is easy to sympathize with this drive. The vast majority of teachers and administrators I encountered at these schools sincerely believe in doing all that they can to help their students succeed, however they may define it. But, by structuring teaching as a kind of labor that satisfies the generation of a particular kind of value, like Marx's example of blacksmithing, "The occupation, instinctive almost as a portion of human art, unobjectionable as a branch of human industry, is made by mere excess of work the destroyer of the man."

Burnout is a real concern for teachers and school leaders as well as upper management at charter school networks. Marx notes how,

> By extending the working day, therefore, capitalist production, which is essentially the production of surplus-value, the absorption of surplus labour, not only produces a deterioration of human labour-power by robbing it of its normal moral and physical conditions of development and activity, but also produces the premature exhaustion and death of this labour-power itself. It extends the worker's production-time within a given period by shortening his life (1990).

At all points in the organizational chart, employees of charter school networks are well aware that the exacting demands of their positions are in conflict with whatever they may conceive of as a healthy lifestyle. When Jay told me of their decision to leave the classroom at the end of the year, they said "I just needed to take a break from killing myself". Rob reflected, "Work life is

funny. I feel like work is my life. I talked to my mother about it, she said that's how it is at first." This isn't just a matter of the number of hours worked or the zeal with which employees pursue their tasks, but is a case of a sacrificial ethic.

Donovan, the human capital director at one of the charter school networks I observed apologized to me for their illness before I sat down to interview them between his other meetings for the day, saying,

> If I was a normal employee, I wouldn't be here today. The work is so urgent and important that I have to be here. Is it the drive of the employee, or the organization, or both, I suspect it's both. I think all orgs that are successful attract a certain kind of employee. Our organization attracts the kind of people that will power through walking pneumonia and be present on the day before the 4th of July. That's the nature of the beast.

Donovan knows this drive is problematic in the long run, telling me,

> Work Life Balance is the million dollar question in this industry. We work very hard. As a human capital director, I should be advising myself to stay home. I suspect that intervention will happen later. How do we create a space where we say it's ok to call in sick? They (teachers) work just as hard or harder than I do and they deserve it as much as I do. That's what drives me.

Donovan has spent a greater part of the year strategizing for how to improve working conditions for teachers, and crucially, none of these strategies involve working less. Some of the strategies outlined include,

> Next year, we're moving outside of typical benefits. We will do things to make people's live better. For example, we're looking to provide on-site car washing. I know it sounds weird… We're also looking into dog walking. I know it sounds frivolous, but we're a dog culture here… We're looking into discounts with area gyms… We are partnered with other Charter Management Organizations to offer more affordable child care that matches our teacher's schedules… Our benefits are available to domestic partners. We're going to start to offer on-site wellness visits from doctors. Looking at our health care costs, it was no surprise that the highest cost was urgent care, because teachers were ignoring their illnesses until the last minute. We negotiated with our healthcare provider to get the co-

> pay to be the same as a regular doctor's visit. We're trying to target our benefits to our employee's habits and needs. Things like helping with oil changes. We're trying to remove those annoying tasks from your daily life. This past year, we had tax help for the first time. I got an email from a high performing teacher asking for help managing her money…. People say it's because you want to keep people at the office. Yes, we do! But we know they're going to stay whether we offer this or not, how do we help them?

These programs all carry with them a concern for making teachers working lives less difficult, but they also contain the logic of maximum extraction of value.

Marx uses a simple diagram to describe the length of the working day, saying that "a line A ——— B represents the length of the necessary labour-time, say 6 hours… The extension BC of the line AB represents the length of the surplus labour" (Marx 1990). The capitalist can make more profit by increasing the length of BC by adding working hours to the day. There are however, social and political limits to these kinds of extensions. Another method of improving surplus value extraction is to increase the efficiency of the labor process so that AB can be satisfied in less time while keeping the total hours worked constant. Thus a worker who is twice as efficient spends more time generating surplus value, and less time on their own needs. Donovan's benefits provisions are articulated with concern for the needs of teachers and network employees, but they are also akin to this second extension. By "removing those annoying tasks from your daily life" Donovan is working to shorten the length of AB while holding the total hours constant or even increasing them as a result of healthier employees. In either case BC is extended.

While New Orleans charter schools depend on the discourse of "these kids", the lack of a union contract, and the demands of test based accountability systems to justify the length of their working days, these factors would be for naught if their talent pool could not withstand the rigors of their burdens. The remaining major factor in the extension of the work day is the way that

charter schools rely on youth as a reservoir of potential. Besides race and place of origin, age and experience is the other defining difference between teachers before and after the Post-Katrina expansion of charter schools.[2] While many considerations of youth perspectives in New Orleans schools focus on students (Michna 2009), I contend that we have to consider teachers under the rubric of youth and youthfulness, as more than a statistical difference among these teachers, but as a powerful ideological structure. Anthropologists have long understood the plasticity of youth as a cultural category (Bucholtz 2002) and here I argue that the dramatic shift in the demographics of the New Orleans educator workforce has shifted local understandings of the relationship between youth and teaching as a form of labor. While recognizing the coercive means through which veteran, local, and black teachers were initially, and continue to be excluded[3] it is important to also reckon with the ways that new teaching demographics also transform teaching as a generational phenomenon. The turn to youth by charter schools allows them to mitigate some of the "life-destroying" aspects of their labor regime.

Youthfulness has become a highly prized characteristic in the human capital practices of charter schools. There are several institutional incentives for charter management organizations to favor young teachers, including lower salaries and benefits costs. Free from satisfying a contract with the teachers unions, charter schools were not required to take part in the Teacher Retirement System of Louisiana, meaning that veteran teacher's retirement benefits would not carry over charter schools. This serves as a disincentive for veteran teachers to look for positions in charter schools and shows how the demographic shift in educators is shaped by our privatized healthcare and retirement systems. However, youthfulness has also been imbued with ideological

[2] Per Buras (2015), by 2011, black teachers composed 50 percent of teachers in charters, down from 75 percent, and white teachers were 46 percent of the workforce, up from 24 percent. 40 percent of teachers had three years or less experience.
[3] (Buras 2015, Dixson 2011, Saltman 2007)

powers and a “culture of smartness” as a workplace asset (Ho 2009). This can make teachers feel “old” or veteran when they would not have recognized themselves as such. Nora told me that at her previous position at a traditional public school “I was the youngest teacher by fifteen years. I'm one of the older teachers at (this school)!” Transplanted from other places, youthful teachers don't have the kinds of local connections or family commitments that can compete. Teachers who stay long enough to start have children have run into difficulties negotiating their new families with the demands of school as a workplace. One teacher in particular, Kelly, recounted to me how she timed her pregnancy to have the baby at the beginning of summer break to avoid missing school time to be with the newborn. During the following school year, she struggled to get legally mandated accommodations such as a room for pumping breast milk and felt the school director to be unsympathetic to her extra burdens as a mother. Kelly told me, “I asked him what he would do if his wife were in the situation I am, and he would make ridiculous, stupid comments like, ‘I would never let my wife be a teacher and have a baby’!”

While perceptions of the benefits of youthfulness play out in many complicated ways in the day to day operations of charter schools, they also structure hiring and retention processes in meaningful ways. In my time in New Orleans I interviewed administrators who spoke of the ways that young teachers don’t ask when school gets out at career fairs, how they work longer hours, they don’t question managerial authority, and their lack of familial attachments tends to increase their investment in workplace status games as a source of social belonging. Kerry, a charter CEO, told me that when hiring, “we pretty much select for people that fit in culturally, and they know they fit in and it makes them feel special.” Youthfulness is thus a key element in the construction of teachers and educators as working subjects, endowing them with a pliability

and sense of attachment that enables new intensities of working culture in New Orleans charter schools.

As Marx has shown us, the working day is a field of struggle in which value is generated, subjectivities are formed, and rights are contested. However, the extension of the working day isn't the only means by which charter schools attempt to distinguish themselves from traditional charter schools. In the next section, we take a look at some of the ways that charter schools in New Orleans have worked to "professionalize" teaching as a means of shaping their teachers as particular kinds of workers, professionals.

Professionalization

> *Why do we work so long and so hard? The mystery here is not that we are required to work or that we are expected to devote so much time and energy to its pursuit, but rather that there is not more active resistance to this state of affairs… What is perplexing is less the acceptance of the present reality that one must work to live than the willingness to live for work. By the same token, it is easy to appreciate why work is held in such high esteem, but considerably less obvious why it seems to be valued more than other pastimes and practices.*
>
> *-Kathi Weeks, The Problem With Work*

In the previous section, we examined some of the structural and ideological forces that work to both extend the working day at charter schools and produce the extended working day as a contested discursive territory. In this section, we will use Kathi Weeks "post-work" theories as a foundation for a discussion of the kinds of worker-subjects that charter schools in New Orleans produce and to interrogate their attachments to work itself under the guise of professionalism. It's important to recognize in the previous section that when my informants were critical of the work regime of charter schools, it was always in terms of sustainability and capacity, a question of strategy and efficacy, whether teachers worked too much or too little, too hard or not hard

enough. Teachers, school leaders, non-profit workers, entrepreneurs, were all uniformly committed to the idea that some species of "hard work" was necessary to serve "these kids". Zadie, an administrator at one of my field sites, was particularly enthusiastic when describing the unique work environment at her school,

> I would not go back to working at a traditional public school… Everyone is here for a greater purpose and everyone is aware of the sacrifices that must be made and they take joy in that sacrifice, being together and feeling like we're working for something. In traditional schools, people stopped believing that what they did could make a difference.[4] That's it, people are willing to make a sacrifice, and willing to improve themselves. I mean – have you hung out at a traditional public school?

No one, not Zadie or any of the other employees at her school or others, ever questioned whether we should consider teaching "work" at all, or raised the question of whether "work" was the right way to organize the pedagogical development of our society's children, and with understandable reason.

Besides longstanding American commitments to understanding the self as a worker, teachers in American public schools and New Orleans in particular has organized for many decades to be recognized as workers and won many concessions in so doing. Since the nineteenth century, teaching in public schools had been caught between two poles – that of being an occupation of care, feminized and art-like, and that of being professionalized and scientific, masculinized and industrial. While post-Katrina New Orleans is a dramatic example from recent history of moving from one pole to the other, there have been multiple waves of transition between the two in American history, typically resulting in the displacement of female and racially marginalized teachers in favor of professionalized educators. Embracing teaching as work has been used to exclude educators as unqualified and unfit, but it has also served as the

[4] This assertion echoes Aaliyah's reflections from chapter 1 that before the post-Katrina reforms, people didn't believe the schools could be fixed.

basis for union organizing to protect these same teachers and build a power base among black communities in New Orleans (Fairclough 1995). Work is not uniformly oppressive in its effects, but it is nearly universally regarded as an appropriate and desirable framework for organizing school life.

Kathi Weeks wants us to question these deeply held attachments to work. Weeks contends that by naturalizing work as mode of activity and subjectivity, we have depoliticized it as a terrain of struggle and narrowed our conception of upon what levels of social life work operates. For Weeks, work is not just an economic practice, but also a "social convention and disciplinary apparatus" that people engage in out of more than economic necessity. Weeks reminds us that in Max Weber's theorization of the work ethic, it is at its core deeply irrational, as well as Moishe Postone's assertion that "On a deep, systemic level, production is not for the sake of consumption". Work "produces not just economic goods and services but also social and political subjects… Exploitable subjects are not just found; they are, as Michael Burawoy famously argues, made at the point of production." Echoing the work of Salzinger (2003) and Freeman (2000), Weeks reminds us that gender is not something one merely brings into the workplace, but that subjects become "gendered in and through work." This formulation holds for racialization and other forms of social differentiation as well, and Weeks states that the work ethic has been a powerful locus for making claims upon the worthiness of racialized subjects in American history. Given the racialized discourse of teacher quality discussed in chapter 1, this point should not be lost on us. Weeks help us to realize that work doesn't just make things, it makes subjects, writing,

> The ethic is advice not just about how to behave but also about who to be; it takes aim not just at consciousness but also at the energies and capacities of the body, and the objects and aims of its desires. The ethic's mandate is not merely to induce a set of

> beliefs or instigate a series of acts but also to produce a self that strives continually toward those beliefs and acts. This involves the cultivation of habits, the internalization of routines, the incitement of desires, and the adjustment of hopes, all to guarantee a subject's adequacy to the lifetime demands of work (Weeks 2011).

By focusing so intently on how teachers should work, charter schools also end up changing what kind of people teachers should be. Therefore, professionalizing teaching is not a matter of colorless organization, it is the grounds for many layers of subject making, racialization, and class conflict.

It can be difficult to make a critique of work that is composed of more than a criticism of working conditions, which does not valorize people who work for being workers as it decries their exploitation. Weeks claims that to be properly critical of work, "We have to challenge both production and productivism" (ibid). Weeks again invokes Postone to claim that "the ensuing analysis intends not to advance a "critique of capitalism from the standpoint of labor," but to pursue a "critique of labor in capitalism"" (ibid). Weeks views work as not just a matter of exploitation, the extraction of surplus value from workers, but of the way "work dominates our lives". Work itself is a political problem and Weeks asserts that even many Marxist and leftist critiques of capitalism still carry a productivist philosophy at their core. This is why Weeks finds the autonomist Marxist tradition particularly useful, writing,

> The autonomous Marxist tradition is thus useful in this instance insofar as it simultaneously centers its analytical apparatus on work and disavows its traditional ethics. Central to that tradition is not only the analytical primacy accorded to the imposition of work as fundamental to the capitalist mode of production, but also the political priority of the refusal of work— a priority recorded in the call not for a liberation of work but a liberation from work (see Virno and Hardt 1996, 263) (ibid).

It is important to keep this anti-productivist and anti-work perspective in mind when analyzing the working lives and conditions of teachers in New Orleans charter schools. The point of

analyzing the working day is not to sympathize with the benighted charter school teacher's exhaustion or exploitation, though such sympathy may have a place in both political advocacy in education and in ethnographic ethics. The point here in scrutinizing the professionalizing discourses of charter schools is not to point out how it works to exclude certain kinds of racialized and class subjects from teaching positions while privileging others, though doing so is important political and analytic work already done by others. The point is to appreciate how these dynamics of exploitation and exclusion are both productive and rooted in their structuring in relations of work itself, to understand how an embrace of work is one of the key factors in the changing shape of teachers in New Orleans school as racialized, localized, and generationalized subjects.

One of the most contested terms in debates over charter school based education reform is "professionalization". One of the central criticisms of Teach for America and other alternative certification organizations as well as charter schools themselves is that they "de-professionalize" teaching by bringing in "talent" who have not been trained in schools of education and traditional teacher preparation programs, who have fewer years of experience, who stay in the classroom for less time, and in charter schools are generally not unionized. A 2016 American Federation of Teachers resolution titled "Advancing Our Professionalism" states,

> WHEREAS, our work and its importance to the well-being of our country and communities is diminished by those who would starve the public sector, hold wages hostage (as happened in the Detroit Public Schools district)[5], devalue professional experience and public employees, and turn to outside "experts" who may be dangerously ignorant of our work, all of which deprofessionalizes our jobs and erodes the vital services we provide; and

[5] Detroit Public Schools were placed under emergency management by the state of Michigan and have one of the highest proportions of charter schools in the country after New Orleans (check for dates).

> WHEREAS, the devaluation and deprofessionalization of our members' work and the work of our communities is deeply rooted in the racism, sexism, classism and other institutional forces affecting those we serve; and
>
> WHEREAS, the AFT was founded 100 years ago as a "consciously feminist" movement that challenged administrators to give teachers more control over their working conditions, secure professional salaries and win academic freedom:
>
> RESOLVED, that the American Federation of Teachers and our affiliates will fulfill our mission as unions of professionals by advocating for the professional needs of our members with the same intensity we advocate for other terms and conditions of employments, such as compensation and wages… (AFT 2016).

While these critiques put valuable attention on the way that charter school based reforms have circumvented the traditional hierarchies of teacher preparation, I argue that characterizing these agendas as "deprofessionalizing" can obscure as much as it reveals. Staking such a strong claim on the grounds of professionalism buys into the same productivist tendencies that Weeks cautions us to be wary of. I have no doubt that many of those deploying this kind of critique are sincere in their productivist tendencies. Rather, I claim that such investments create an analytical blindspot to the productive effects of charter schools' attempts to reshape the teaching profession. Looking at evidence gathered during my fieldwork, I contend that it would be more accurate and effective to frame the "human capital" practices of charter schools and education reform organizations as a case of "hyper-professionalization" and that this dynamic should be analyzed from a post-work perspective free from attachments to the professional status of teachers and other education workers.

Advocates of charter schools recognize the kinds of demands that are placed upon teachers there, but believe that ultimately that charters are better places to work than traditional public schools serving low-income black and brown students. Eli, a manager at an education non-profit in New Orleans, had been a teacher at a traditional public school before working to

expand charter schools and used that experience to draw a contrast as they described to me reformer's efforts to raise professional standards in schools, saying,

> The things that keep people in their jobs are the same in schools as elsewhere. A culture of high expectations where people feel supported, strong professional development, stretch opportunities, clear goals and feedback, incentives to stay, monetary and non-monetary rewards. This is the same thing you would find in the private sector. There are opportunities for advancement. Schools that are better at retention do that. There wasn't a lot of turnover at (the traditional public school he taught at), but it was a terrible place to work and low performing.
>
> …A lot of the stuff you see, the woman who leads the anti-TFA group who wrote the thing about the evisceration of the labor market and the unions and how labor is not protected here? The working conditions at a lot of the schools are really tough. We have a lot of young leaders who don't really know how to develop their people and do all those things. I think it's a lot better than three years ago, and a whole lot better than 2008.
>
> But I would say it's problematic to think of teachers as labor, you don't think of doctors and lawyers as labor, you think of factory workers as labor. If you want teachers to be innovative, thoughtful, resourceful professionals, then making rules about how long they should work every day, and exactly how they should be paid and fired and when is just sort of antithetical to that, you would never do that to what we think of as profession.

Whereas the AFT resolution defines professionalism in terms of the rights of teachers, the concessions they are able to win from employers, and protections of their expert knowledge, Eli sees professionalism in terms of flexibility, career pathing, and information flow, using the private sector as a model, rather than the public sector (which is the largest source of union employment in the United States).

In embracing professionalism, both critics and proponents of charter schools have spoken of "elevating" the teaching profession, indexing the kinds of demonization of teachers analyzed in chapter 1. One of the concrete ways this goal manifests is in discussion of how to give teachers recognition for increased mastery and progress. In unionized schools, such recognition is often baked into the contract with increased salary and rights according to tenure proceedings

and seniority schedules. However, at charter schools, no such progression is formalized and methods of recognition are more fragmented and haphazard. Lisa, an entrepreneur who consults on teacher professional development, told me about one effort to award teachers with digital badges, like Xbox achievements, to recognize their successes, but was deeply skeptical of the effort, saying, "I think it's a great idea for kids, but for teachers?… We're trying to elevate the profession and I don't want to treat teachers like children. I want serious elevation of my professional growth, recognition that feels authentic. I don't think badges is the solution." Lisa's reflection gives form to Weeks' claim that "Professionalization… is more about style, affect, and attitude than about the content of the work" (Weeks 2011). It is possible for both charter advocates and critics to claim the mantle of professionalism because they are using this icon to pursue different ends and maneuver in different discursive territories. On the one hand, unionized teachers use professionalism to protect teachers as a class and ensure certain rights, whereas charter advocates use professionalism in an atomized politics of recognition.

One of the ways that reformers on the "innovation and design thinking" wing of reform (see chapter 4) discussed teacher professionalism was under the rubric of "unbundling the teacher". Unbundling is a tool design thinkers use to take a complex problem and break it down into its component parts. At Incubator, the start-up that fosters education entrepreneurs that is the focus of chapter 4, employees would talk about the teacher itself as a problem that needed to be unbundled. Lisa told me that "I think the role (teacher) is unsustainable, we need to rethink the role, and then we'll see greater retention… We expect teachers to be everything, and we need to think about specialization and professionalization." Campbell explained to me her belief that teachers were asked to do too much in the current charter school environment, that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to teacher roles was not adequate to the challenge of education the New

Orleans public school population, and that new technologies would enable the role of the teacher to be radically re-designed to better fit the individual talents of teachers themselves as well as the needs of students. Monica, another facilitator at Incubator, was particularly excited about a school being developed by a former participant in Incubator programming, where the idea of unbundling was the foundation of the school model.

Technology is one of the primary mediums through which attempts at unbundling are executed. Many charter schools in New Orleans have expanded their use of "blended learning" programs, including some of my field sites as well as one of the new school experiments I discuss in chapter 4. In a blended learning environment, students use internet and digital media to navigate academic content at an individualized pace. There are various methods for implementing this basic structure, but the examples I observed usually entailed students completing a selection of "learning modules" while the teacher used the time previously spent on whole class facilitation using data from these programs to target specific students for interventions, requiring a different skill set. This model promises greater personalization for both teachers and students at the same time that schools use it to justify a higher teacher-student ratio. Off the record, an informant familiar in working with the model expressed some skepticism as to district and network motivations before affirming their support, stating,

> The district is interested in cost savings, how can we leverage technology to reduce staff and lower the budget? I felt ambivalent about that, but I no longer feel ambivalent, because we are dealing with a crisis and we do not have enough quality teachers. We have a very real talent problem, if this helps us keep good teachers, and reduce poor performing teachers, awesome… Publically, the plan is about personalized learning, privately, it's about budget.

At the same time that "unbundling" can be a means of shaping the teacher's role according to personalized aptitudes and needs, it can also be a vector for "de-skilling" and austerity, which should be distinguished from de-professionalization.

Techno-professionalism ultimately entailed a level of collaboration and surveillance that employees at charter schools felt distinguished their work environment from traditional public schools. Hayden, a hiring manager at a charter school network used neighboring Jefferson Parish as a contrast,

> Jefferson Parish still kind of has that model from the old Orleans Parish. That's definitely a pull (of veteran teachers towards Jefferson Parish). We lost a teacher at one school to Jefferson Parish because she wanted to be in a more traditional public school setting… where she can close her door and be an all-star and not have to worry about collaborating and sharing, and maybe that fits a little bit more to her lifestyle. We lost another teacher over requirements to teach and develop other teachers. She told me if we just left her alone to teach, she'd stay… Yes Orleans Parish and Jefferson Parish are separate districts, but now they're like two different worlds entirely.

The trope of "closing the door" was used by, Kim, principal of a school in Hayden's network when she discussed her experiences working in Orleans Parish before the storm as well as several other educators who had become teachers through TFA and other alternative certification organizations but before charter schools became prevalent. Closing the door was a term they used to describe their isolation and abandonment in traditional public schools, whereas charter schools emphasized "open doors", constant collaboration, and frequent observations of classrooms by administrators and other teachers. As a novice ethnographer, I was nervous about intruding upon classrooms and disrupting teachers and students, but teachers were so used to being observed by a number of different individuals that they were openly indifferent to my presence in the classroom. I was just another visitor passing through, and indeed, many of the classrooms I visited had dedicated desks for observers, with folders including the days lesson

plans, forms for giving feedback, and lists of classroom rules and procedures. To be a professional in these settings meant to be open and collaborative.

There were times however, when techno-professionalism, collaboration, surveillance, and unbundling combined to turn teachers into a kind of prosthetic of the teaching work process. Rob was a first year teacher during my fieldwork and like many first year teachers struggled with classroom management and lesson delivery. As such, Rob was frequently visited by their administrative coach for observation. About halfway through the school year, the coach decided to try out a new system called "real-time teacher coaching" whereby the teacher would wear an earpiece and the coach would give corrective instructions as the teacher delivered their lesson. Earlier in the year, Rob had told me that "I don't really feel like myself in the classroom," and they talked about being nervous about the real-time coaching in their grade team meeting before the observation. I arranged with Rob to come observe during this session, but the coach asked that I not attend so that Rob would be more focused while trying out the new technology. In the next grade team meeting following the observation, Rob spoke with the other teachers in their grade about the stresses of this kind of observation. Rob said, "I usually feel good after an observation, but I cried after the first session… I didn't like it when (the consultant from the real-time coaching company) was telling (the coach) what to tell me… I don't like doing things that go against what I want to do" (rough transcript). Apparently, the coach was being trained on how to use the real time coaching technology at the same time, adding another layer to the prosthetic professional rabbit hole.

I can imagine that some schools find the rapid feedback cycles of real-time coaching to be very useful in improving teacher performance. On the other hand, it's clear that Rob was profoundly stressed by the experience and the technological mediation of their observation can

come off as a bit surreal. What is important to recognize here is the way that this technology accelerated an already existing vision of professionalism in charter schools and facilitated the employment of Rob and other teachers as a kind of prosthetic to focus tested visions of "what works". I would argue that this techno-prosthetic professionalism is not a break with previous regimes of professionalism in traditional or charter schools, but an intensification of it. One of the points that Marx makes, as well as more recent theorists like Postone is that capital and the wage labor relation make prostheses of workers and capitalists in principal. The capitalist is "capital personified" and the worker is dominated by the wage labor relation, forced to sell their labor power to reproduce themselves. Technology enables particular manifestations of this rendering prosthetic, but the core dynamic is social, political, and organizational. Rob's distress however, isn't just because the technological mediation of feedback was unfamiliar or confusing, but can be connected to his feelings of not "being like himself" in the classroom. At the same time that Rob is rendered prosthetic through devices like real-time coaching, charter schools also traffic in discourse which personalize work and intensify the affective demands of being teacher and a worker. These "emotional labor regimes" exist in tension with techno-professionalism and are the subject of the next section.

The Joy of Fitting In

Despite the many attempts to professionalize and standardize teaching throughout American history, the job has persistently carried many connotations of care and femininity. The veteran teachers that were fired en masse after Katrina were overwhelmingly black women, and critiques of their dismissal don't simply balk at violations of their rights, they underscore these women as the "backbone of the black middle class" as the proper stewards of the mostly low income black children attending New Orleans Public Schools. Thus, to a certain extent, teaching

in New Orleans has always been an occupation laden with affect. In the narratives of veteran teachers found in chapter 1, they spoke of "special relationships" with students and parents, intimate connections to the neighborhoods and communities that their schools served, and of their long-term investments in their schools. However, I argue that these affective bonds existed alongside and in spite of the labor regime of public school teaching between the end of official segregation and Hurricane Katrina. Charter schools make affective demands of teachers as workers and professionals with greater intensity than traditional public schools, and crucially these affective imperatives are racialized in such a way as to subtly exclude many of the veteran black teachers that formed the majority of the teaching corps before the post-Katrina reforms. These changing demands on teachers conflict with the kinds of working subjectivities veteran teachers had been accustomed to and align with broader transformations in neoliberal economies, service and professional labor, and entrepreneurial spirits.

It would be fair to say that even though teachers in charter schools are younger, more white, and more often not from New Orleans they still form powerful affective bonds with the students and communities they serve. Teachers often refer to their students as "my kids" and even years after leaving the classroom, managers at education non-profits will still affectionately reminisce about their favorite students. Walking around the office at the Teach for America New Orleans office, you can see pictures of students on cubicle walls along with classroom paraphernalia. What is distinct about the charter school work environment is the way it makes affective demands on teachers as an explicit and routine professional duty. Looking at the expanding service sector of the American economy in the late 20th century, Robin Leidner theorized this phenomenon as the "routinization of service work" (1993). Leidner posed that as the service sector expanded dramatically over the course of the 20th century; corporations began

to demand greater routinization and standardization of worker interactions with customers. Relations that had previously been left to the personal discretion and charisma of individual service workers had become subject to systematic and scientific management, entailing a new relationship between workers and their "selves", stating, "The selves of service workers are bound up with their work in ways quite different from those of workers who interact with objects or data rather than people." Self-transformation became an integral part of success in the workplace, opening up new terrains of management, as Leidner states, "Nevertheless, the standardization of human interactions does encroach on social space not previously dominated by economic rationality." In the "close the door" narrative of teaching, teachers were "left alone" so long as they satisfied certain requirements, but in charter schools, collaboration and fit in unique "school cultures" require affective self-management in new ways.

Weeks sees this greater encroachment of work into the sociality of workers as an intensification of the domination of work, writing,

> First, workers' investment in the work ethic is increasingly relevant because in many forms of work— for example, in many service sector jobs— employers want more from their employees than was typically demanded in the factories of the industrial era: not just the labor of the hand, but the labors of the head and the heart. Post-Taylorist work processes therefore tend to require more from immaterial laborers than their sacrifice and submission, seeking to enlist their creativity and their relational and affective capacities. It is not obedience that is prized, but commitment; employees are more often expected to adopt the perspectives of managers rather than simply yield to their authority (Bunting 2004, 110). Whereas Fordism demanded from its core workers a lifetime of compliance with work discipline, post-Fordism also demands of many of its workers flexibility, adaptability, and continual reinvention… Especially in the context of service work and work with an affective or communications component, the individual's attitude and emotional state are considered crucial skills, along with empathy and sociability. Indeed, the very distinction between a worker's skills and attitudes becomes difficult to sustain, since, as Robin Leidner notes, "the willingness and capacity of workers to manipulate and project their attitudes in the organization's interest are central to their competence on the job" (1996, 46) (Weeks 2011).

Important to note in this passage is the collapse of distinctions between "skills and attitudes". Urciouli has discussed the ways that neoliberalism encourages workers to think of themselves as collections of skills (Urciouli 2008). Crucially, these skills are not concrete specializations in specific arenas, but aptitudes and expertise that can be flexibly mobilized in diverse settings, bringing to mind charter CEO Kerry's claim in chapter 1 that he hires teaching talent based on mindsets, because specific teaching skills can be "coached up". The charter school teacher is called upon to market their skills and attitudes in ways that veteran public school teachers have traditionally not.

Recalling the example of "The Together Teacher", the idea that one should blend their personal and professional lives begins to make more sense. There is a way that this idea is packaged with the ideological notion of "loving what you do" to make it seem like work is an extension of personal preferences and fantasies of life trajectories, but these broader trends in service work point to the possibility that this blending is a way for work itself to colonize and shape these preferences and desires. Carla Freeman's term "emotional labor regimes" is meant to capture not only how middle class Barbadian women are compelled to conduct affective labor in their professional endeavors, but how the subjectivities entailed in this work expand into other dimensions of their lives, writing,

> The emphasis on certain kinds of emotions, and labor required to foster these emotions, is increasing across all dimensions of middle-class life… The melding of emotional labor and emotional desire between commercial and private life is not performed along one single or predictable path or in a singular direction. The interactions, the activities they perform, the skills involved and the ways in which they enact them, feelings and desires produced in both themselves and their relational others that together form the basis of work (i.e., the paid, formal activity recognized as entrepreneurial work) increasingly mirror entrepreneurial life itself and vice versa. One aspect of the current entrepreneurial

> impetus not only in the marketplace but also in the otherwise private projects of intimate relationships, parenting, and self-making is the manner in which all elements of life become subject to similarly emotional labor regimes (Freeman 2014).

Teachers in charter schools don't just face increasing demands on their time, as discussed earlier in the chapter. The hyper-professionalization they undergo also makes demands upon their affect and subjectivity in ways that repel teachers accustomed to a different labor regime.

Many of the school administrators and human capital managers I spoke with at charter school networks expressed a genuine desire to increase teacher diversity in the schools and to hire more veteran teachers. They claimed that the problem wasn't that they were rejecting veteran black teachers outright, but that they "just don't apply" or that they "don't work out" when they are hired because they don't "fit" with school culture. This lack of fit was often framed in terms of veterans not wanting to work the kinds of hours and schedule that charter schools demanded or not wanting to participate in collaborative activities. Zadie recognized that they have a problem bringing on a diverse set of teachers to their staff, telling me,

> My number one goal is to have the best teacher, but that doesn't feel good when you have ten people show up for the job and they're all white. So the big question is: why aren't local black people applying to work at this school? Because I'm not getting diversity in my applicants, and if I had diversity in my applicants I could build a diverse staff, because I don't just want TFA people. Not all of them (TFA people) stay. I want a school full of people that want to be moms, that want to stay, and that doesn't happen if we just hire young transplants. But I'm not getting the people. I talk to Donovan and I ask why aren't people applying here. He says there is a stigma about our school -- that it is temporary, that it is run by foreigners, that people don't understand our kids, so I don't want to work there.

Rather than imagine these reactions to charter school work cultures as a kind of stubbornness or unwillingness to change old routines, we should consider that part of what these veteran teachers resist when they don't apply, or things don't work out, is the kinds of affective and subjective demands of the emotional regime of charter schools.

Charter schools can't just make school culture and collaborative work appear through decree – they have to create rituals and practices to shape teacher enthusiasm and assent to these modes of professionalism. One of these rituals that staff at many charter schools across the city were asked to participate in is something that was often called "staff standup" or "morning meeting". Typically, at each school, all school staff would have a 10-15 minute meeting in the cafeteria, gym, or theater. Staff would stand in a large circle facing each other and school leaders and teachers would share announcements and issues of concern. On Mondays during football season, there was often talk about the Saints. A crucial part of these meetings were affirmations, whereby staff would give "shout outs" to particular teachers or staff who exemplified school culture or were particularly helpful. Often these affirmations were tied to specific values in the official school culture, such as "grit" ("Shout out to Rob for showing grit. He had an honest conversation with me before real-time teacher coaching"). Kerry's school had the most intense version of morning meeting I observed. Kerry and the leadership at their schools insist that "adult culture should be the same as kid culture" and thus when teachers broke up into small circles for part of the meeting they addressed each other, clapped, used turn and talks, and other classroom techniques that they would use with children all with a relentlessly positive and energetic tone.

Zadie dealt with a staff that was less enthusiastic about these morning rituals. As a new school leader Zadie was eager to make her imprint on school culture and was astounded by the lack of purpose teachers had in morning meetings, saying, "Some people thought we did staff standup in the morning so I can see who is on time. That's not why we do it! I could have you punch a card. People didn't understand. You have to communicate the purpose." When I

interviewed Zadie, she had just finished hiring teachers for the new school year and was excited to bring in people who fit her vision for a positive work environment, stating,

> My hiring process has been so picky. Coming in mid-year as a leader, I wasn't working with people I picked. Hiring for next year is my first chance to shape exactly what I want this building to be next year. That's why I've been super picky about who I've been hiring. I want people who are incredibly positive, incredibly resilient, and people who do not speak negatively about past jobs or students… I want people who hold students to high expectations, but do not shame students. I am sure you have seen students get yelled at in this building. I don't want to see that, ever. I know that means hiring for people who are able to stay emotionally constant when the work gets tough, so that has been my number one goal right now.

Zadie told me that they were happy with the composition of the new staff, and that they only lost people who were not asked to return or who were not good fits.

Zadie emphasized that even though some of the people that left were "good teachers", they were not a good fit for the school culture she was trying to build, telling me "As a school leader you want to have a strong enough school culture that people can identify for themselves if they fit in or if they don't. And if you don't, no hard feelings. Go have fun somewhere else." Zadie explained that it was difficult to find a teacher that would be a good fit,

> It's hard to find people that are what we want and we are what they want, because we make them choose us… I will be honest on the phone and say, this is why you will not want to work for us. You will work long hours. It's really hard. Some teachers are here from 6am to 6pm and I say if you're still interested email back in the next 24 hours. I think that's really effective in screening, I try to scare them off.

One of the other teachers on Rob's grade team was recognized among their peers to be the best teacher on that grade level, but clashed with administration because they did not conform to the classroom management techniques Rob and the other first year teacher in the grade were advised to employ. This teacher felt that the standard classroom discipline techniques of the school were cold and oppressive. Eventually, this teacher left over the summer because they no longer fit

with school culture where they felt they had to “flip a switch to teach and demand authority”. One of the affective demands of teaching in charter schools like Zadie’s is the desire to fit, the ability to express enthusiasm for a unique school culture and crucially, present oneself as the kind of person that aligns with the value and the mission of the school.

Hayden, the human capital manager at a different school network, agreed that school leaders were focused on positivity, saying,

> When I heard you say the (other) principal said positive, I knew exactly what that person meant, just with different words. It’s team player, have a smile on their face, bringing a lot to the table, and things like that. It's great to have 100 percent compliance on that. But if you have someone who has great results, will you sacrifice that if someone is a little bit more of a prickly pear to deal with, for lack of a better description? They're not always on board with everything at the school, the ra-ra's, the pep rally's the things like that -- over the person that may be a first year grad from TFA and will basically let you do and say whatever you want to them and they're going to do it because they're that type of person, but now they’re getting 20 points less on their scores with their kids because they don't have that teaching experience. It's definitely one of the things my school leaders look for -- are you going to bring something positive to school culture? They'll definitely place a higher value on someone who is trying to get better and is positive than someone who may get the best test scores, but doesn't play well with others. To use a sports analogy, we’re not building an all-star team, but guys that work well together. Our schools are in that camp where we would take that positive person over someone who is draining the culture.

Zadie and Hayden show us how positivity is more than an externalized display of affectively legible gestures, expressions, or attitudes. Positivity connotes a kind of compliance and flexibility desired by school management, as well as a personalized enthusiasm for the particular school culture.

Annalise, in designing a school model explicitly counter to the dominant trends in No Excuses charter schools, was highly skeptical of fit, particularly as a tool of race and class reproduction, telling me,

> Fit is just another word for "you're not enough like me. I want to hire doppelgangers of myself". It may be a white middle class fit, but it's also a doppelganger in the way you think and the way you interact in the workplace. Even when I do see black people in some of these schools, many of them are, um, cognitive replications of the school leader or CMO leader. They have to be, because, this idea that the school or CMO leader could not be right about every single thing is far-fetched (sarcastic)… Fit means I need to reduce the chance of being challenged out of fear it might spread. Collaborative inquiry, other people's ideas - it's the same kind of change averseness that caused the problem in the first place.

The idea that school leaders and hiring managers might want to hire people "like themselves" has a commonsense quality to it. When I asked Donovan, the human capital director at Zadie's network, about the ways that social network effects might be hampering efforts at increasing teacher diversity, they somewhat defensively assured me that this is something you see "in every industry". But as decades of research on racialization have shown, identification of likeness is a very complex and multi-layered process mediated by cultural practices and instructional imperatives. There is no particular reason in the abstract that school leaders should want to hire people like themselves. It is the particular emotional labor regime of charter schools in New Orleans as well as broader intensifications of affective demands in professional settings that drive this tendency.

These reflections should cause us to reframe our understanding of what it means for veteran teachers, local teachers, or black teachers to not fit in at a charter school. School leaders at charter schools will insist that these are personalized misalignments with school culture, i.e. "this just wasn't the place for them". What these characterizations show us instead is that No Excuses style charter schools aren't explicitly excluding these kinds of teachers, but have constructed a work culture in which the affective demands of the workplace exclude those who do not conform to particular modes of professional subjectivity. When veteran teachers refuse to

apply or refuse to conform they are resisting new kinds of demands of an encroaching work culture, even if only to hold up the expectations of the old one.

Conclusions

The work ethic at charter schools is not just a matter of working longer hours or with more intensity, it is also a vehicle for new professional subjectivities and affective demands in the school as a workplace. Critically, it is one of the means through which black, local, and veteran teachers continue to be excluded from charter schools. Weeks reminds us that the work ethic has played this role for a long time, writing,

> Over the course of US history, there is a continuous calling into question of the work commitments and habits of different immigrant and racialized populations. Whether it was the panic about the inability of US corporations to compete with a more vigorous Japanese work culture or the ongoing debates regarding the supposed inadequacies of the work orientations of "inner city residents," "the underclass," "welfare mothers," or "illegal aliens," the work ethic is a deep discursive reservoir on which to draw to obscure and legitimate processes and logics of racial, gender, and nationalist formations past and present. In particular, as the history of racialized welfare discourse demonstrates, the work ethic continues to serve as a respectable vehicle for what would otherwise be exposed as publicly unacceptable claims about racial difference (see Neubeck and Cazenave 2001) (Weeks 2011).

It is tempting to respond to attacks on the work ethic solely in the affirmative and defend the record and capabilities of all of the kinds of teachers that have been excluded and maligned in the post-Katrina school system. This is important work, and scholars, educators, and activists have been doing it since the major wave of reforms began. But it shouldn't be the only critique of the work sensibilities and structures of charter schools.

When I began my fieldwork, I imagined that I would conduct a labor ethnography of teachers in charter schools in order to take teachers seriously as workers and that I could take the

same kinds of analytics applied to factories, offices, and entrepreneurs to the school building. I believed that doing so would be an ethically appropriate way of illuminating how the work cultures of charter schools were racialized and would respect the efforts of both those excluded from and empowered by education reform. However, along the course of my fieldwork and post-field reflections, it became apparent to me that I, like many of the educators I observed, was too committed to work, too enthralled by its dignity and importance as a social form. I've come to think that the problem with teaching in charter schools is that it is too much like work, too professional, and too regulated. This isn't to argue that we should go back to some idyllic pastoral vision of community schooling, but that it might be productive to question the place of work in schooling. I have no idea what a school that was less entangled in work and work ethic might look like, but following Weeks, I think the utopic question has a provocative political utility. I've come to now think that taking teachers seriously as workers means taking work less seriously.

CHAPTER 3

WE ARE BRIDGERS: RACIAL BROKERING IN NEW ORLEANS EDUCATION REFORM

"Look here, let me tell you something…" Sage says, thrusting their finger out towards me before planting it firmly on one of many stacks of documents strewn across their desk. Sage's face twists up and their head turns sideways when getting ready give the gift of revelation, a not too infrequent occurrence. I've gotten the sense over our many rap sessions in this grey office overlooking the Central Business District that I'm not a privileged listener; this is Sage's normal mode of address. Sage leans in a little closer, crossing my preferred force field of informant proximity. The door is open, as usual, and Sage's voice drops a bit, as if the mostly white ears all around us were too delicate for the truth to come.

"We have got to stop letting people tell a single story. There isn't a single story now, there are multiple stories now." Sage, of course, is referring to the Post-Katrina Grand Reform Narrative that I've previously analyzed in Chapter 1. This is the story that the schools were terrible before Katrina and that a set of reformers, who Sage insists are all ultimately controlled by a wealthy and influential figure I'll refer to as the Chief, have turned around New Orleans schools through the reorganization of school governance through a conversion to charter schools and an influx of transplanted human capital. Sage consistently defends the record of New Orleans educators before 2005 and questions the progress made by leading charter networks. Sage questions the basic democratic legitimacy of the reform agenda while praising the fortitude of black educators, saying that "without Katrina they (reformers and the Chief) wouldn't have had the stamina" to push through these drastic changes against local resistance. Sage believes,

because Sage was there, telling me, “I was a veteran educator, I played every role, school leader, teacher, and knucklehead.” Sage constantly lauds the local Historically Black Colleges and Universities, such as Xavier, and claims their efforts to prepare teachers and serve students are ignored in favor of arbitrary preferences for places like Harvard. Through all these pronouncements on the history of education and reform in New Orleans, Sage is an unapologetic champion of the quality of the overwhelmingly black veteran educator corps that served New Orleans students before the storm and in diminished capacity after. Their unshakeable confidence in the dedication and effectiveness of these teachers calls into question the credentials and accoutrements of talent associated with the influx of human capital from elite colleges and national non-profits.

Sage’s insistence on proliferating stories is indicative of the changing winds of education reform in New Orleans. While the renewed focus on diversity by reform organizations necessarily involves the provisional introduction of new perspectives, this proliferation has other dimensions. First, the singular narrative is losing steam as a result from challenges within and without. Scholars, activists, and community members have vigorously challenged reform narratives and agendas. As we’ll explore in the next chapter on design thinking oriented education entrepreneurs, some reformers have come to question and revise their own narratives and commitments as they reckon with the consequences of their own record and the persistence of racialized segregation and structural violence despite their best efforts. Indeed, in the ten years since the levee failures and the seizure of ninety percent of the public schools by the state government of Louisiana, there has literally been a vast proliferation of stories about the city and its schools in the media. Many of these news articles, television reports, tweets, blog posts, photographs, speeches, performances, documentaries, books, and conversations follow the

contours of the dominant narrative, but the conformity has degraded over time as counter stories have attained greater prominence. The problem becomes not just challenging the dominant narrative about education reform, but how to navigate the vast multiplicities of perspectives that emerge from its fall.

Over the course of many encounters, I've been struck by the aggrieved tone taken by Sage on the behalf of black educators. According to Sage's visions of the dominant narrative, educators like him, local black institutions, and community groups don't get credit for what they have done for the city's public school students. In multiple conversations, Sage discussed one student in particular who represented this lack of recognition. Kris had graduated from one of the more lauded charter high schools in the city and had been written about in the media as a success story. Sage became visibly upset the first time I mentioned Kris, whom I met serendipitously when they happened to be giving a talk to current students the day I visited their alma mater. Unbeknownst to me, Sage claimed to have known Kris for a very long time and was angry with the way their story had been used by education reformers and the media, on two accounts. First, Sage claimed that the predominately white charter school staff was given all the credit for Kris' academic success and that family and community members like Sage were unrecognized for their support throughout the years saying, "Kris is where he is because he was invested in by a bunch of black people… they (charter school folks) were afraid to go pick him up in the Iberville projects, but those people get all the credit… boy you don't even know." Second, Sage confided in me that Kris was struggling mightily in college. Some of this was a matter of academic preparation, but Sage claimed that much of it was social and economic as they exasperatedly claimed that Kris didn't even know that they needed a coast for the winter while attending college in a northeastern state. Sage's tone grew more indignant as they reflected on the potential

credit and consequences, stating, “Kris is struggling right now, but if he's struggling, if he quits, it's his fault.”[1] Sage reminds us that as much as transplants and reformers may be invested in improving the lives of the predominately black and poor students they serve, the stakes, rewards, risks, and consequences are dramatically uneven.

Sage argues that the storm so disrupted black community political organization that the Chief was able to organize a reform agenda in its absence. Part of this is “our own fault” and “we lost the dynamics of politics and power.” Sage laments “There was a split in the black community where some wanted to be in the room with (the Chief) and the others.” While Sage is making an internal critique of the lost influence and power of black educators after the storm, it is well documented that pro-charter policymakers and educators considered the teacher’s union and the school board to be impediments to reform. Both of these institutions had been controlled for decades by fractions of the black professional and managerial classes of New Orleans. As of 2016, only a handful of schools have elected to return to the control of the local school board or to organize again under union auspices, and those that have contain staffs disproportionately composed of veteran educators. This is the case despite the fact that the emergency laws giving control of the schools to the Recovery School District have expired. A deal to return all the schools in the RSD to the Orleans Parish School Board is being brokered as of this writing. Sage isn’t convinced this return to local control will change much, as in their estimation, reformers had gained control of most of the school board seats.

Narratives of reform often portray a false dichotomy between white transplants running charter schools and education non-profits and black communities either excluded from schools as

[1] In no small part due to criticisms from people like Sage as well as their own internal concern for the struggles of their graduates who did make it to college, Kris’s school would come to redesign their curriculum for upperclassmen in order to foster greater independence and awareness of the challenges of college life beyond academics.

educators or subject to the whims of reformers. Part of multiplying the stories involves recognizes that these groups aren't monoliths. Specifically, in this chapter it's important to recognize the way that black involvement in reform efforts is not just about passive administration and domination or romantic resistance, it's also about participation, accommodation, compromise, strategy, and navigation and that these engagements reflect the vast diversity of black political life. What I've realized over my time getting to know Sage is that this sense of grievance is not just about what kind of stories get told about the people outside of that literal and metaphorical room. It's not just about the way we talk about educators before Katrina. It's perhaps even more about the black and local folks who managed to stay in the room. The ones who've been working with reform organizations all along, or who have joined along the way.

See, the vexing thing about Sage is that Sage is speaking from inside the room.

Sage works at (and maybe sometimes for) Reform Corps. The door is open because Sage is constantly receiving updates from directors and assistants on the progress of current projects and reminders of meetings and functions to attend. Sage hardly ever sits in that room for too long. Many of our conversations are Sorkin style walk and talks. Looping around the Reform Corps office, we pass by staff responsible for recruitment, for placing teachers and talent in schools, assisting teachers in those schools, development staff glued to headsets talking with donors, conference room meetings. Sage usually has a word or a handshake for each of them.

I'm still not exactly sure what Sage does for Reform Corps. I've asked many times, both directly to Sage and to colleagues and critics. "Nobody knows what Sage does!" was a common response. Sage tells me that they are responsible for advising Reforms Corps on black

community engagement, political affairs, and conversely connecting members of the community with Reform Corps. Sage helped broker a community governance agreement with a controversial charter school. Sage also worked on a contract for unionized bus drivers at another. Sage also worked to build community support for reform oriented candidates for the school board. Sage works with a program to build a pipeline of local black educators who are trained to work in charter schools and break through the perceived glass ceiling of leadership in these organizations. When students at one charter school went on strike against the administration, Sage came in to talk to them. When the state brought in new leadership at a newly merged charter high school, Sage worked to represent community interests.

The best I can say is that Sage is a racial broker, a person responsible for connecting and translating between fractions of communities whose relationships to each other are in flux as a result of the dislocations of the levee failures and the reform agendas that followed. I witnessed Sage working on some of the above examples, and in each one Sage put reformers in a room with community members and leaders who either didn't trust the reformers enough to talk to them before, or that the reformers didn't know were important and influential. Sometimes this meant that administrators, non-profit directors, and charter school teachers got beat up for extended periods of time listening to withering criticism both of their specific organizations and ventures, and the broader reform climate. Part of Sage's influence comes from the illumination reformers experience in these settings and the humbling they receive. Reform Corps uses a different term for this role in their recently revised corps values for New Orleans. They say "We are BRIDGERS. We synthesize, collaborate, and build upon the strengths of others." While it could be easy to dismiss this language as multiculturalist pablum, my experience in New Orleans indicates that bridging, or as I call it, racial brokering, is a crucial site of racialized knowledge

production, of racial expertise, though an unstable and developing one. By providing community and leadership fractions an interface with reformers, fostering affective states of humility, and articulating a strategic and provisional engagement with charter schools and education reform brokers like Sage capitalize on the void created by reformer's disruptions of the racialized power structures and hierarchies of public education. In doing so, they create a professional arena in which technical knowledge about racialized matters becomes an integral piece of the reform project rather than a secondary concern. While early reformers considered issues of race, racism, diversity, and structural violence irrelevant or secondary to the core functions of running successful schools, racial brokers like Sage have made it so that racialized expertise is essential to the functioning of charter schools and reform oriented organizations.

Amongst all the things that I think Sage does or does not do, this is the work I want to focus on in this chapter. As narratives of education and reform proliferate, there has opened up a space for actors who can claim to help others navigate the sea of stories. This navigational capacity is valued not only for its ability to curate the quantity of perspectives at play but also its adeptness at assuring schools, non-profits, and entrepreneurs which tales are to be trusted and conferred credibility. Sage is one amongst many examples of (mostly) black folks working within or alongside reform oriented organizations and movements who attempt to guide both indigenous and transplanted, white, black, and otherwise in a time of racial flux opened up by reform. In the remainder of this chapter, I'll discuss the efforts of other brokers working at various institutional locations throughout New Orleans and at different scales. Morgan works with teachers and school leaders, while Riley navigates the community of entrepreneurs and non-profits. Darcy and Garvey work primarily with black community organizations in order to facilitate their adeptness at shaping reform agendas. Finally, I will discuss the ways that racial

brokering involves not just power brokering between fractious communities, but also a kind of quotidian tinkering with practical problems of infrastructure as I examine the consequences of the school choice system on busing and transportation. But first, a theoretical excursion on how we should think about racialized expertise.

Putting the Craft in Racecraft

Barbara and Karen Fields (2012) employ the term "racecraft" to reorient our understanding of the relationship between race and racism. Rather than subscribing to conventional understandings of essentialized and natural racial difference as the impetus for the development of racism, they argue that it is the practice of racism which produced the "illusion of race". Racial orders in the United States emerged through practices of domination such as slavery, apartheid, and segregation. New Orleans is a particularly important place to reckon with the production of such illusions. A central site in the American slave trade, it also served as a location in which "the illusion of race" was woven into institutions touching on labor (Arnesen 1991), learning (Devore and Logsdon 1991), and inheritance (Dominguez 1986).

While race can operate as an illusion, it also possesses a deadly materiality. Specifically, we should attend to the ways that this illusion accrues to infrastructures like housing, schooling, and transportation. While much of the recent anthropological meditation on infrastructure doesn't specifically attend to race, von Schnitzler (2015) notes of the South African case, "In several ways, apartheid as a state project was brought into being and secured by infrastructural modalities of power; indeed, in certain respects, apartheid was precisely about infrastructures. Think of the segregated public amenities, the jarring images of race-specific entrances or "whites

only" benches that came to metonymically represent the injustices of apartheid." The same could easily be said of the United States.

Infrastructure often brings to mind heavy, hidden, and mundane structures like freeways, pipelines, and housing. However, we should also consider "ideological state apparatuses" like schools within the infrastructural discussion. In particular, schools serve as a kind of racial infrastructure in the United States in several key respects. While schools and schooling may not seem to function as infrastructures in the same way as roads, public housing, or fiber optic cables do, I would argue that they serve as technologies of circulation in similar ways. In the most obvious sense, the physical plant of a school building is inextricably linked to regimes of segregated housing and transportation systems. New Orleans in particular has a history of school construction being guided by segregationist housing agendas (Stern 2014). Not only do schools deliver subjects into the working or carceral world, they are also key levers for mechanisms of racial segregation and resettlement, phenomena which are being reconfigured in contemporary New Orleans. While school construction has driven racial settlement and segregation patterns throughout the 20th century in the city, the reorganization of schools under charter networks and a system of school choice in which students no longer attend neighborhoods schools but criss cross the entire city is a critical site of the refiguring of contemporary racial infrastructures.

Racial brokering is an important element in the construction, maintenance, and deconstruction of racial infrastructures and has been for centuries as studies of colonial and postcolonial societies have shown. Crucially, racial brokering itself doesn't imply a specific moral or political imperative. Creole and black elites have used their positions among and between different racial, class, and political communities to the benefit and detriment of themselves as well as poor and working class black people, often at the same time. Their

leadership has been lauded as a kind of radicalism (Hirsch and Logsdon 1992) as well as criticized as the self-serving doings of a professional managerial class willing to administrate the marginalized to their own limited advantage, in the name of racial representation (Reed 1999). Reed's critique of black elites in the post-Civil Rights era is notable in that he does not frame these actors as dupes of a white establishment nor as tragic figures. Focusing in particular on the history of black mayors in major American cities, Reed has questioned the assumption that black politicians could not do more for poor and working class black people because of impositions from white capitalist elites. Reed contends that scrutiny of the records and positions of most of these politicians and elites would reveal that their pro-growth and business friendly policies are sincere and that these policy makers should not be regarded as organic representatives of black people as a whole, but as autonomous elite fractions. This insight is critical because it discounts the idea that racial brokers are either fully dominated puppets or merely venally pursuing their self-interest. Their agendas are worth examining on their own terms and scrutinized according to their ideological and strategic objectives in the context of specific historical and institutional locations. These activities and agendas are certainly constrained by circumstances, but that is true of all politics.

Critical Race Theory as well as recent anthropological work give us rich understandings of race as performance and identity, of its contingent, arbitrary, and historical character (Jackson 2005). These traditions have shown race to be a "social construction" animated by "racial projects" and "controlling images" and operating at social registers that defy "realness" (Hill Collins 2000, Omi and Winant 1994). Targeting other domains, studies of race science, from eugenics to more recent work on genetic heritage testing have considered race as a matter of techno-scientific expertise (Palmié 2007, Roberts 2011). These studies have taken care to both

debunk any biological foundation for race while also taking seriously the cultural and political articulations that emerge from racialist science and its public reception. We should think of racial brokering as fitting somewhere in between these poles as a kind of techno-social expertise closely associated with the social organization of work in the United States. Barbara Fields in particular emphasizes the genesis of regimes of racialization in the crucible of capitalist systems of enslavement (Fields 1990). If we think of labor as a culturally and historically specific mode of social organization rather than a universal, then we can appreciate how work in the United States has generally relied on racialized modes of expertise and brokering, from the overseer to the union boss to the human capital manager.

In different ways, Booker T Washington and W.E.B. DuBois mobilized universities and philanthropy as racial brokers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but it is after the victories of the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement that we see racial brokering by African-Americans incorporated into governance on a mass level, and not just as subjects to white patrons. As in many cities across the nation, New Orleans saw the proliferation of African-Americans in government position and state dependent social service agencies and organizations (Germany 2007). This growth came in the context of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, but persisted as much from the mass organization of African American communities and elites as federal directives. These positions opened up the space for a great number of positions which required or were fertile grounds for the development of racial and class expertise.

However, public employment and public services, in general and as sites of racial brokering, proved to be fragile spoils in the fight for justice and equality. Over the course of the late 20th century, social services, public agencies, and publicly supported community programs came under severe attacks both programmatic and ideological and subject to new forms of

punitive accountability where they survived (Wacquant 2009). The space for maneuver seized upon after Katrina accelerated many of these efforts. In the following years, most of the public housing in the city was destroyed, at times in the name of "the community" with officially recognized community leaders servings as voices in support of demolition and replacement with mixed income developments (Arena 2011). Again, even if you consider the destruction of public housing to be a form of structural violence, the point shouldn't be to decry these "community voices" as fools or cowards. Rather, I would ask us to take note of how essential the production of such a perspective has become to the operations of municipal politics as "participatory technologies" (McQuarrie 2013). Public solutions were disregarded and discredited during reconstruction and recovery efforts as well. Volunteers, religious organizations, and private contractors were relied on for reconstruction efforts, resulting in inefficient provision of assistance as well as the reorientation of subjects of aid in neoliberal molds (Adams 2013). Most germane to our conversation here, the state government, with the support of foundations, the federal government, and various elite fractions, seized control of ninety percent of the city's public schools, fired over 7000 unionized, mostly black educators and school employees, and turned the schools over to forty plus private management organizations over the course of nine years.

How does the reorganization of public services, and schools in particular, under private management with narrow and punitive state accountability alter the terms of racial brokerage as a form of labor and knowledge production? This question is by no means settled. Racial brokerage in New Orleans education reform is experimental. By experiment, I do not mean merely that settled patterns are disturbed, or that actors and processes are uncertain and unpredictable. Rather, drawing on Science and Technology studies we should understand experiment here as a

particular disruption of prevailing paradigms enabled by changes in political, cultural, and material forces (Schaeffer and Shapin 1985). Experiments are culturally specific modes of knowledge production which rely on particular modes of social organization. The experimental mode is above all demonstrative, and New Orleans charter school reform has been posed as instructive for the nation from its inception. While race and racism are always under reconstruction, the term experiment here marks the exceptional conditions that have prevailed in New Orleans after Katrina. Racial meanings and infrastructure take work to maintain, and the dislocations occurring after the storm profoundly disrupted the relationships which sustained the previous status quo. Already reeling from decades of disinvestment and "aggressive neglect" (Ladson-Billings 2006), it is no accident that New Orleans became a target for an unprecedented expansion of charter schools. Like subjects of clinical trials whose "bioavailability" make them appealing to international pharmaceutical firms, New Orleans public schools were available to experimentation through a complex set of historical and political circumstances (Sunder Rajan 2007).

What kind of racial expertise is developed and experimented upon when the kinds of people who may have worked as a unionized teacher, or for city government instead work for non-profits and private organizations? What is the tension between the strategic interests of various stakeholders in the emergence of these new forms of racial brokerage? How do black figures operating within reform infrastructures accommodate, challenge and or become compromised? How do the politics of multicultural recognition (Povinelli 2002) become refigured when racial brokering is privatized? These questions matter because to date, the role of racial brokerage and the actors who deploy it as a form of racialized expertise have slipped between the cracks of dominant narratives about post-Katrina reform. Prevailing narratives cast

reformers as white interlopers fresh off the plane from the Vineyard and local black New Orleanians are cast as either supporting and consuming or resisting and criticizing reform. The few times that black people working in charter schools and reform organizations are mentioned, they are framed either as tokens and puppets in a more critical vein, or increasingly, celebrated as examples of inclusion and diversity. My examination of these actors is not meant to affirm or exalt them nor to criticize them as a class, easy as that could be. After all, as a black person of the professional and managerial classes and a former Teach for America Corps member, I have quite a lot of personal affinities with these folks, affinities that proved to be no small advantage in building ethnographic rapport. The point however, is not to demonstrate how these individuals are unrecognized but to argue that the work they do is underappreciated and undertheorized as a mode of racialized knowledge production increasingly necessary to the functioning of reform efforts.

In the following, I discuss several figures whose work involves various forms of racialized brokering and expertise. I came to know these informants through my day to day participant observation at several charter schools and by hanging around various education non-profits as well as attending their public events. Through their stories, I seek to attend to this brokering as a technical craft. Each of these subjects does this brokering as a significant part or all of their primary work role. The kinds of racial expertise they deploy and develop are not simply contingent and tactical performances, but strategic and increasingly formalized techno-social endeavors. Their work resides not only in conversations and relationships, but strategic documents, rubrics, PowerPoint decks, core values statements, contracts, and protocols.

Morgan

Reform Corps is a mission driven organization. At any given moment, one could peruse their website, walk their halls, or read interviews with teachers and staff and you would see a collective orientation to ending educational inequity. The organization spends a great deal of money on public relations, which is sometimes criticized as a sign of mission drift or self-indulgence. This disciplined messaging should instead be regarded as a sign of a paradigm shift in schooling where the importance of communication strategy to schooling and reform efforts has increased dramatically. Charter schools themselves mirror this PR sophistication, and veteran school administrators, even in traditional public schools, have admitted that one of the hardest things to learn in the new system is how to market and sell your school and brand. However sophisticated these branding operations are, they only create the illusion of unified organizations. As with any ethnographic engagement with a sizeable organization, I found in Reform Corps competing and conflicting commitments and agendas at different levels of the organization. While many transplanted corps members and staff members felt Reform Corps as a part of their identities, I found that affiliates of color, like Sage, working in positions which required the deployment of racialized brokering and expertise expressed a high degree of ambivalence and strategic engagement. As Sage put it to me in their office, "I don't like Reform Corps, but I'm dating it… But I never said I couldn't fall in love." In this section, I highlight another member of the Reform Corps staff who shows the ways that the expansion of the non-profit sector after Hurricane Katrina served as an opportunity to drive parallel and sometimes conflicting missions in the interstices of reform.

I had a real hard time pinning Morgan down to shadow for a day of work. Morgan works for Reform Corps, as development manager for RC teachers in classrooms. This entails a highly irregular schedule, shaped around the needs of whatever fires need to be put out at the time. Morgan is responsible for tracking the progress of RC teachers, providing onsite evaluation and feedback as needed as well as developing group afterschool training for their portfolio, who are spread over multiple charter schools in different networks. Morgan also communicates with principals and administrators in order to both exchange perspectives and information designed to improve the teacher's performance. Sometimes this involves consulting with a principal or dean when a teacher is performing poorly as is under consideration to be fired or not retained for the coming year.

Unlike other development managers, Morgan's portfolio is focused on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Some mistake this designation to mean that Morgan only trains black corps members, which rankles Morgan. Morgan sees it as their job to deprogram RC teachers from the "oppressive" and "controlling" pedagogies in practice at many charter schools and is not afraid to contradict school leadership if they disagree with their approach. Practically, this means Morgan doesn't work in some of the schools more committed to "No Excuses" style pedagogies. Or, as I learned when I'd ask Morgan what they thought about charter school X or network Y, "Man, you know I don't fuck with them," or "that's why I don't mess around with them". Nevertheless, I observed that Morgan had strong relationships with the schools and principals they do fuck with. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is a student centered approached to teaching and learning the poses that knowledge of student's cultural perspectives and backgrounds can improve classroom practices. Like the design thinkers we will discuss in chapter 4, CRP sees students as critical knowledge producers in their own right and that their

cultural capacities should inform and direct school operations in conversation with other forms of recognized expertise.

When Morgan decided to leave the classroom after several years, the RC director sought them ought for this teacher development role. Morgan was known as an excellent teacher with strong data, and furthermore, the director prized Morgan's "authentic" relationships with their school community. RC had been subject to intense scrutiny for recruiting mostly white transplants to teach, and the director was focused on bringing in staff who could serve as bridges to "the community". Thus, while Morgan most directly instructs their teaching portfolio in the techniques of CRP, they also serve as a model for colleagues and create community facing programming, such as a summit planned with high school students on leadership. This isn't always a smooth process. Sometimes other RC staff aren't sure which side Morgan is on. There are times when Morgan wonders about "getting out of here". School leaders have asked that Morgan not work with their teachers. Other staff members confuse CRP with other approaches to diversity and multiculturalism, betraying a frustrating lack of awareness and attentiveness to Morgan.

In one sense, Morgan serves as an avatar for audit cultures in the way that they track teacher progress and build systems of accountability. Indeed, many other development managers in RC have focused relentlessly on making sure that teachers are considered successful by meeting performance goals, primarily executing classroom management and discipline techniques and hitting test score goals. These are powerful forces shaping the operations of charter schools as well as traditional public schools after No Child Left Behind inaugurated a testing heavy accountability regime during the George W. Bush administration and Race to the Top continued the trend under Obama. While test based accountability is often tightly associated

with charter based reform, they should be appreciated as different movements, with distinct but entwined histories motivated by different agents that sometimes overlap. At the school level, my teacher and administrator informants were far less enthusiastic about testing than say the researchers and non-profit executives I would listen to at reform oriented think tanks downtown. As discussed in chapter 2, testing was one of the number one things teachers talked about as an alienating facet of their jobs and administrators lamented how they might be able to restructure their schools if not for the swift and dire consequences of failing to meet testing goals.

Morgan is subject to these coercive imperatives, but uses them as a license to explore more personal goals and projects. While decrying the testing accountability system, Morgan takes pride in the fact that their teachers have some of the highest scores among all RC teachers. Meeting this bar allows Morgan the freedom to pursue CRP without too much interference from higher ups. In fact, Morgan argues to their bosses that their teachers meet the "low bar" of test scores because they are being trained in CRP. Any system of domination or bureaucratic organization is going to have spaces for maneuver and cultivation of alternatives within. Morgan takes advantage of the satisfaction they receive from hitting testing metrics to expand and develop CRP programming with their teachers and community members. But this is contested terrain. Morgan gets into arguments with higher ups at the same time as they rely on their bosses to advocate for them when the utility of CRP is questioned. Morgan's ability to do their work can be read as a sign of the ways that racialized brokering can manifest as a fragile compromise resulting from ad-hoc strategic maneuvering. This work is a provisional space for Morgan rather than a realization of their ambitions.

Morgan is a different kind of transplant than the white elites who take up most of the airtime when discussing post-Katrina New Orleans. Hailing from another regional Southern

metropolis, Morgan grew up visiting New Orleans with family. A member of a historically black sorority and a frequent attendee of church services, Morgan participates in segments of New Orleans black institutional and cultural life that most other RC teachers and staff can't or don't access. Morgan came to New Orleans as an RC teacher in the first few years after Katrina, committed to teaching in a black community. When Morgan first applied to RC, they indicated that they would be willing to go anywhere in the country. However, Morgan told me that after a phone interview, the RC recruiter they spoke with was convinced Morgan would be perfect for New Orleans. Unlike many other corps members, Morgan was placed at one of the schools that remained under veteran black leadership and maintained closer relationships with her school community than with Reform Corps. During my time in New Orleans, just when I thought I was getting a handle on the networks and stakeholders, Morgan would say something to me like "How haven't you talked to Mama Sarah?" or "Do you know Coach?". There was a casual authority to these questions. When Morgan posed them to me, it wasn't a challenge or test of my local knowledge. Morgan assumed that of course anyone who knew anything about education in New Orleans would know who Mama Sarah was, or Coach. Morgan's sense of communal networks and values were centered in networks removed from the reformers that I had spent much of my time getting to know up to that point. Morgan attempts to make sure that their teachers are just as aware and at ease with these alternative mappings.

That ease with and investment in community leadership is something that Morgan grew up with. Morgan's father was in the Nation of Islam and was "hardcore into black development, he was a business owner, he lived his philosophy… he dreamed of a world that where black people owned the things in their communities… we should have our own… he didn't trust the government." Morgan's mother used to be a Black Panther, who is "less radical" now, but has a

sustained record of working to improve literacy in black communities. This commitment to black communities is the most central principle in Morgan's life. When I asked Morgan if they had considered becoming a teacher before being recruited by Reform Corps, they told me, "No… I knew I wanted to do something that involved the betterment of black people, but I didn't know what it would be yet… but talking to the recruiter helped me realized how many of my leadership activities in undergrad already involved education in some way." While Morgan may do the job of a development manager, and by most accounts do it well, they see the position as a provisional step toward improving black communities and building black leadership in the form of students who are taught by educators trained in CRP.

In addition to satisfying the requirements of audit cultures and programmatically instituting CRP, much of Morgan's job entails rendering legible talents and capacities that go unrecognized in the white dominant work culture of most New Orleans charter schools and education non-profits. I got to see Morgan do this facet of the job twice. The first time I knew ahead of time, and the second, I didn't recognize until later. On the first occasion, I met Morgan at the RC office and we drove around to a couple schools to meet with teachers in their portfolio. It was clear that Morgan had friendly and deep relationships with not only the teachers, but school leadership and office staff as well. At the second school we stopped at, I sat in on an interview between Morgan and a judge for a prestigious national teaching award. One of Morgan's teachers was nominated for the award and the selector was gathering testimony. Much of the conversation is about the teacher's effectiveness as an instructor, their leadership with their peers, but Morgan makes sure to emphasize the kinds of "identity work" that this teacher does with their students. Morgan explains how this teacher, even with kindergarten students, takes on "issues like slavery" which she later tells me is "something people don't take on org

wide," meaning that it's not prioritized across the entire RC organization. Morgan emphasizes that this work is critical throughout schooling, and that it isn't recognized enough, that when it is, it's foisted onto black teachers like their mentee without consideration for their other responsibilities. Literature on diversity in academia has called this a "black tax". Morgan has the double duty of mentoring their teachers in CRP and also fostering the conditions of recognition of this work amongst school leadership. In doing so, Morgan helps to renegotiate the line drawn between work and not work and the hierarchies within the realm of job functions. Morgan advocates for their teachers to receive greater recognition for a broader range of efforts on the one hand. The question remains what the consequences may be of legitimating, formalizing, and rendering visible CRP practices as "work", keeping in mind the anti- and post-work analysis from chapter 2.

The second time I went to work with Morgan, I had expected to be working within that more casual ethnographic modality of hanging out. Super Sunday, the Sunday closest to St. Joseph's Day, is a time when Mardi Gras Indians parade through the neighborhood, the largest procession occurring in Central City. Morgan and other educators I knew would be out, and Morgan offered to let me tag along. As we walked through the crowds we constantly encountered friends, colleagues, mentors, and mentees. We came upon a group of Morgan's teachers, enjoying the party, one in particular with Crown Royal in hand. While talking with the teachers, several of Morgan's former high school students approached. They were filming a rap video and a couple of Morgan's teachers were more than happy to join in, waving the bottle of liquor casually – a standard trope of the genre. After the scene was shot, we returned to more mundane conversation. Morgan connected with one of their students who did hair with a teacher in need of said services. I stood back from the group as I realized that they were all the same age,

save Morgan. They might have all passed each other by if not for that connection. The kinds of connections present here were also part of Morgan's work.

RC corps members are valorized in such a way, that even when they share the same birth years as former students of RC alumni, they are ascribed an air of maturity and competence that exceeds their age. The youth-ness of being a young teacher is different from the youth-ness of being a young public school graduate. In the field I would talk about this scene and ask school leaders when they would start hiring Morgan's former students, and their own former students, at the same frequency as they hired transplants. After all, ten years into reform, their organizations had taught all the local young twentysomethings. I'm used to posturing about diversity hiring, but most leaders were more sincere about that specific framing. They weren't ready. As pleasant as that rap video was, there was still a vast gulf between Morgan's students and Morgan's portfolio. I'm sure that if Morgan ran a school, they would have no reservations about hiring their former students. As much as Morgan works to render their talents and capacities legible to reformers and their audit cultures, there are limits to what is possible in the current conjuncture. Morgan works in a space of maneuver, but not transcendence.

Riley

"MY BROTHA!" The flamboyant greeting is ever jolting even as I learn to anticipate it. I step in, cock my right arm at an angle, meet Riley's hand, bring it in for the chest bump and the double tap on the back. Whether I was at RC, Incubator, a bar, or Riley's classroom, the greeting was the same. I got along easy with Riley. Even before I knew we were both from California and fans of Tupac[2], we had a repertoire of gestures, rituals, and sartorial cues that smoothed the

[2] The greatest rapper of all time.

rapport building. Riley had been teaching for several years when I came to visit their classroom and their relaxed authority and clear sense of purpose was the kind of thing I had hoped my classroom looked like when I was teaching at a charter school in Harlem. Riley's classroom practices focused both on academic rigor and "WAR" which was a metaphor for the forces of oppression and domination which held back low income black students who made up the vast majority of the room. Students recited Tupac's poem "The Rose that Grew From Concrete" from memory and if you looked on the wall you could see written statements from every student starting with the phrase, "I declare war…" naming all the forces in their lives that might keep them from reaching their goals. Riley was under consideration for national teaching awards, and was pointed to as a model for culturally responsive teaching.

Thus, I was surprised when I learned how much Riley struggled as a first year teacher. Not in the way that almost all first year teachers struggle with basic instructional practices and classroom management. Rather, Riley struggled to connect to students. In a public profile, Riley reflected, "I struggled to relate to the students, even though I looked just like them." The profile stated that, "The students didn't see any evidence that he came from a similar background, regarding him as just another one of the white folk that they read about. He was Childish Gambino to their Lil' Wayne." Riley reflected that they were too focused on enforcing their authority and not enough on understanding student's lives. After one student was murdered by another, Riley suffered a crisis of faith and resolved to become a better teacher, more in tune with their student's lives and communities. Riley changed their classroom philosophy, coming up with the war motif and infusing political and cultural messaging into everyday practice.

However, Riley eventually became frustrated with trying to teach this way within the strictures of a No Excuses charter school. As I'll discuss in more depth in chapter 4, Riley

applied to work with design thinking focused Incubator to start a new school with a new school model. The school would focus on building connections to community by having students spend significant chunks of their learning time interning with tech companies to build projects that worked to solve local problems, such as building websites of social media campaigns for local businesses and entrepreneurs. When students aren't learning job skills, they are supposed to pursue self-directed projects using blended learning, with teachers acting more as facilitators and consultants than in the traditional model of schooling. When the school opens, running it will necessarily involve a kind of brokering between school administration, industry, and various community fractions. During my field research, Riley often had a difficult time explaining how this model was different from traditional trade schools, but they believed that the tech orientation was fundamentally different.

Because Riley was not developing their school according to "proven" templates from other charter networks, Riley had to demonstrate promise and cultivate investment in various forms. Riley conducted prototypes of classroom modules as a proof of concept, which involved convincing students, families, businesses, and foundations to participate in small scale testing initially before running a yearlong pilot housed within another charter high school with roughly 15 students. By building a school model that focuses on tech-industry training while students are still in high school, Riley has had to negotiate relationships between a burgeoning startup culture based in the Central Business District and students spread across the city. Riley's school model is an argument for a kind of community oriented entrepreneurial capacity building as social justice. Riley's success as a racial broker rests on the ability to direct investment towards students both as "bundles of skills" (Urciouli 2008) and as Riley puts it in some of their pitches to investors, as "solutions" rather than "problems". Like Morgan, Riley works to cultivate recognition of values

and capacities they feel to be underappreciated by schools and reform organizations. Riley's school model argues that students have laboring capacities that can be unlocked by schools in the present and not deferred to college or post-college life. This argument resonates with capacity building projects around the globe and shows the ways that "neoliberal" modes of self-help and cultivation can be taken up from "below".

Darcy, Garvey, and the BOC

Darcy is also from the other LA. A graduate of and HBCU in law school and undergrad, Darcy moved to New Orleans for the opportunity to make an impact on "our community". Unlike the other kinds of racial brokers and bridgers discussed so far, Darcy does not work for a white dominated organization, but for the Black Organization for Choice, a national group for which Darcy serves as a New Orleans coordinator. While Darcy communicates with Reform Corps and charter management organizations, on the day to day level you're more likely to find them collaborating with black dominated organizations like the Urban League and Xavier University. Darcy's focus is primarily on building and articulating an autonomous black reform/pro-choice agenda. When I asked Darcy why work for BOC instead of other predominately white organizations with greater resources, they told me, "there are only a few orgs that have the lens I am working in, which is about helping black low income families, about being unapologetic, about being able to take a stance." The priorities and strategies of BOC are different than RC and other non-profits, but nonetheless favor charter schools, private management, and parent choice, or as Darcy says, "Working with BOC is really about not limiting the options children have for receiving a good education."

When Sage invokes the Chief, they correctly underscore the ways that white dominated political formations really have seized control of the formal levers of power in the New Orleans education system, amongst other realms. However, rather than imagining that the educational powers and authority of what Adolph Reed calls the "black professional and managerial classes" as well as community organizations were erased by the physical and political aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it would be more accurate to regard them as displaced, dislocated, and disorganized. Through Darcy, I was able to appreciate specifically how members of black professional and managerial classes might reconstitute and reorganize their influence and authority in a charter school based privately managed system. One of Darcy's frequent deployed techniques of racial brokering is putting white reformers into rooms where they are vastly outnumbered by black educators, politicians, businessmen, activists, and community members where they are not only not the majority, contrary to most reform oriented organizations, but where they are also not the center of attention. Such occasions serve to remind the minoritized reformer and the reader that black people are not only objects of administration and incorporation, but as the founder of BOC puts it, that there are "unapologetically black" political fractions with autonomous agendas.

I sat in one of these rooms at a famous creole restaurant in Treme. Reed has warned that narratives of disaster capitalism and clean slate metaphors in New Orleans underestimate the degree to which segments of what he calls the black professional managerial class have survived and rearticulated themselves to new agendas (2011). Just because public housing and public schools have been decimated, it doesn't mean that all those who administered them disappeared into the ether, though many were excluded from new systems of governance. The faces in the room served as proof of this continuity and adaptation. Local black politicians, veteran

educators, and community activists sat around tables in a private section of the restaurant. And spaced one or two to each table were white reformers in unfamiliar settings. An entrepreneur from Incubator sat at table three. The head of one of the CMO's I was conducting fieldwork within was smiling and nodding at table seven. Ivory, the CEO of a large education non-profit arrived late and asked if anyone was sitting next to me. I was happy to move my bag, as I'd been meaning to email Ivory for months. The polarity of authority in this room felt different. We only talked about the BOC agenda, upcoming events, ways to support. It could have all melted away when everyone drives away, but the unsettledness of this reversal is notable for the mere fact that all those white reformers felt it important to attend this event in the middle of a school and work day.

When white dominated reform organizations invoke black wisdom and authority, they often refer to one of the founders of BOC, someone I'll call Garvey. BOC's annual national conference happened to be in New Orleans during my field year, and I got to see Garvey's powers on full display. Garvey is a skilled orator, but perhaps their most effective brokering tool was the ability to stitch together histories and discourses of black radical and nationalist politics with a school choice agenda. In the course of a keynote speech, Garvey invoked Paolo Freire, Harriet Tubman, John Walton, guerilla fighters from Angola, their good friend Walter Rodney, charter schools, and the Black Panthers. I was not surprised by this. Six years previous, Garvey was the keynote speaker at the yearly celebration of the Harlem charter school network in which I was employed. On that occasion Garvey fixed the charter school movement within the legacy of Malcolm X. For Garvey, charter schools are an as yet unrealized vehicle for black self-determination. In one of Garvey's most effective rhetorical turns, they use shame to motivate black people for not taking advantage of school choice due to fears of white money and

influence, chastising the crowd with, “There are white people I would go in a foxhole with before some of these handkerchief head negroes.”

Darcy, Garvey, and BOC serve to show how racial brokering and racial expertise aren’t merely accomodationist tactics within white dominated infrastructures, but are also used by autonomous black political fractions towards their own ends. Garvey and the BOC represent a conservative cultural nationalist paradigm, as Manning Marable and Ta-Nehisi Coates might put it in which black unity and control of political and economic institutions are the primary goal. This is the paradigm Morgan grew up with and it is an underappreciated factor in understanding black support for charter schools. Speaking at another venue, I watched Garvey give another speech in which they articulated the goals and philosophy of BOC, holding forth,

> How do we better enable our people to make freedom actualized?... We don't build institutional power by making great schools lead by white people… At best, education is an individual rescue mission…We have more faith in education than any other people…We don't have a concept of collective liberation, just individual advancement…

Again, Garvey frames education as a collective mission of a unified people and the pursuit of this vision will result in a kind of collective self-realization. For Garvey and the BOC, education reform is just another tool in a long term nation building project.

Given this vision of collectivity, Garvey is willing to play a kind of diplomatic realpolitik with other racialized community fractions. When not quoting Frantz Fanon, Garvey will talk about being in the room with powerful white influencers, dropping names from time to time. Within the nation building rather than multiculturalist paradigm, these communities and interests are separate bodies to be negotiated with and played for strategic interest. Garvey scolds other black folks who think they are interfacing with white elites on a level playing field,

> You are going to other people and asking them to fund your revolution. When you have to do that you are in a very difficult position. It's hard to be a race of beggars…I had a funder say to me, and I won't tell you who it is, this white man said to me, "I'm old and I'm white. But this is my god damn money and I'll give it to whoever I want," and I really appreciated that because there was no attempt to be politically correct. That is just a statement of fact.

This is a big difference from someone like Morgan, who is black centered, but still believes in transforming the perspectives of white people through tools like CRP. Garvey has a more internalist philosophy that looks to gain resources for black leadership. They're not naïve about the challenges of doing so however. Garvey, like Morgan, has to challenge prevailing standards and render legible and recognizable the capacities of black educators. Garvey puts this dilemma in colorful language when discussing a meeting with white foundation officers, saying, "I don't want to hear that you're only going to give money to people with a proven track record, because y'all have given millions of dollars to young white people who have never proven a damn thing… Don't say you're only going to fund based on what's proven. You know it's not true, I know it's not true." This assertion not only forms part of an argument for the recognition of black quality, it also calls out the culturally arbitrary standard of quality that "young white people" are judged by and calls out these white funders by suggesting they know they are playing a rigged game at some level. According to Garvey, these funders are aware of the dissonance but playing along anyway.

Whereas Sage, Morgan, and Riley try to work within and transform white dominated organizations, Darcy and Garvey show us that racial brokering is also taking the form of asserting a kind of independent black education politics. The expertise they craft is one that at times seeks to ally with or manipulate white elites, not transform or integrate with them.

Get on the Bus

Thus far we've discussed the ways that racial brokers have developed forms of expertise which render unseen capacities legible, manifest unrecognized forms of cultural authority, and facilitate connections between dislocated community fractions. In this section I want to highlight some attempts at brokering and racialized expertise that are closer to the day to day life of schools by looking at the issue of school transportation in order to show how they can work as quotidian forms of practical engineering.

On a sunny November day, I watched hundreds of students stream out of the glass front doors of one of the handful of New Orleans charter schools I had been visiting over the course of the year and tracked their uniformed figures as they filtered into the dozen or so buses lined up on the side of the newly renovated building. With my arms reflexively folded up like a chaperone I observed Devon, the school operations manager, and I could see the calculations and valuations in their eyes while monitoring the boarding process. Devon had just explained to me how they have to coordinate a half a million dollar a year busing operation for the school with a private bus company. While now occupied by a charter school, this building once housed the elementary school integrated by Ruby Bridges in 1960. For their first year in the school, white students and families refused to be in the same classroom with Ruby, and she was taught alone by the single teacher that would assent to the task. While the building fell into disrepair over the following decades, it was renovated for the charter school. The single classroom Ruby sat in alone was restored to a semblance of its historical appearance and sits unused as a kind of museum. Not many years after Ruby integrated the school, white families fled the building itself as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. As Devon and I wrap up our conversation, the buses pull off in every direction towards various corners of New Orleans, evoking alternative trajectories.

I have a fantasy mapping project that I hope to pull off one day if I can get someone with the right skills, software, and data sets. Imagine you're hovering over New Orleans today, like a drone, and each school bus traces a colored line through the city grid. At any particular school you might see anywhere from three to a baker's dozen. Now imagine you're watching this same process happen at nearly 90 other schools in the city. You're watching buses pick students up at their elementary school in New Orleans East and drop them off in front of another elementary school in Central City. You're watching buses pick up students as young as five and as old as twenty, nearly all of them black, from stops under overpasses and next to freeway exits, markers of the highway policies that carved up black neighborhoods all over the country. You're seeing half full buses from separate schools run nearly the same routes. By the end of the evening, you'll see a web which bears the weight of school choice in New Orleans. As someone who spent two hours a day commuting to school by bus for most of their youth, I wonder what the students think about and talk about in their commutes now twice as long as before the levee failures and the state takeover of the school district. Is this striving, this choice worth it, whoever made it? I wonder what they would do otherwise.

While one could stare at my fantasy map and scoff at the bureaucratic morass or admire the endurance and striving of black students and families, one should never forget that they are also seeing the results of a mass unsettling. The cumbersome web of school transportation is a symptom as much as a cruel imposition in service of a blinding commitment to school choice. What if we read the design of school transportation systems as a codex of the landscape and not just a sign of suffering and burden?

On the school level each school or charter network negotiates a contract with one of a handful of private bus companies. Charters are not required to bus their students and some of the

most prestigious schools which draw on more middle class and white students do not. But, as Devon told me the vast majority of charter schools have to bus students as a competitive imperative, otherwise they wouldn't be able to get enough students in the door. Once a contract is decided, someone like Nicky, who works with Devon, pulls up an Excel sheet provided by the company and spends a week entering all the student address information before sending it off. The company takes the data and using software and algorithms designs a number of bus routes which make sense for the student population. These algorithms themselves are racialized as the "sense" which they try to ascribe to student's geographical locations is inextricably linked to residential segregation. These routes are sent to the school as a list and Devon and Nicole look over them together. In this case Nicky is a local while Devon is not and can scrutinize the list for inefficient routes or stops in potentially dangerous or unacceptable locations in a way Devon admits they cannot. During the year both adjust the stops and routes with the company as students move around, which happens a lot among the low income families served by the school.

From time to time they watch surveillance tapes from each of the school buses. They meet with the bus drivers at the beginning of the year to train them in their unique school culture and how to maintain it on the bus itself. They've thought about pooling resources with other charters, but besides the logistical challenges, they are wary of losing control over that very culture. And after all this data entry, mapping, culture shaping, and coordinating, Devon laments that the school probably spends twice as much money on buses as they would with a more "sensible" distribution of student population. That $250,000/year could mean four or five more teachers for the school, a fact which Devon and the principal don't really share with the staff for fear of their outrage. All this is to illustrate how something so ostensibly simple as getting

students into the school building, under this system, requires a complex set of valuations, interactions and processes between actors, institutions, firms, and technologies.

Early on a balmy Monday morning in early February a couple years ago, as students and teachers alike anticipated the beginning of parade season, a six-year-old child was killed in front of their family while crossing the street to get to their school bus stop in Gentilly. Every day, millions of children around the country get up in the morning, brush their teeth, put on their clothes and amble along to their bus stop, sometimes with family, sometimes with friends, sometimes alone. Being humans, we tend to infuse these quotidian motions with ritual. You always walk on this side of the street, you never walk on the other side of pole from your friend, you walk three blocks out of your way to make sure you get there safely. Every morning, the child's mother would walk them and their siblings to the neutral ground of the busy avenue and let them cross the rest of the way on their own, a taste of independence. That Monday morning in Gentilly, there was no reason to think things would be any different. But then a silver Honda swung around the corner coming off the freeway exit and onto the busy avenue, and this family's parting ritual would never be the same again.

I was in the middle of my dissertation fieldwork on charter schools and education reform in New Orleans when the child was killed. I didn't know them, but I knew people who did. Their passing is a singularly tragic event. I struggle with whether it's appropriate to share this here and in other venues, both for reasons of ethnographic ethics and the uncertainty of being able to draw lessons and questions from such a happening. New Orleans has been subject to plenty of writers mining its tragedies for insight in the Post-Katrina era, and I can't yet decide whether such extractive activities are something I can avoid or only mitigate. In the spirit of transparency, I include it here as something I can't stop thinking about.

I foreground this story because, while there are few satisfying answers to be had, it invites us to ask critical questions about the nature of race, school choice, and infrastructure. Why was the child at that particular intersection, near that particular freeway exit, at that particular early hour, to be transported across town to that particular school? These infrastructural questions usually only come to light when these systems break down, or in the wake of tragedy. The layout of streets, the placement of our highways, the design of bus schedules, the siting of school buildings, these things usually remain beneath our notice as they form the components of our daily rituals of circulation. The child was there, in the middle of that avenue, at the moment, by some measure of chance surely, but within a field of probable trajectories constrained by the whims of politics and policy, race and reform. Even children make their own history, though not under conditions of their choosing. The child was on crossing that street at that particular time because due to some confluence of policy, politics, and algorithms, it "made sense" for them to do so. This sense is its own kind of meta racial expertise, and the work Devon and Nicky is a grounded kind of countervailing force.

School buses are significant "cultural and political units" which are necessary articulating infrastructures for systems of public schooling. From the mid-20th century until we recently gave up on dealing with residential segregation as a matter of education policy they were key sites of struggles over desegregation and integration. Now, they are vehicles which enable the ostensible freedoms of parent choice to be sustained on a mass level in New Orleans. Where once, at least according to contemporary critics of charter schools, students attended neighborhood schools with strong community bonds where teachers would "run into parents and students at their local Wal-Mart" (as a veteran teacher recounted at a community meeting), families are now forced to choose and apply to any school in the city, resulting in a system where the more than forty

charter operators are drawing on student populations distributed throughout the entire city. Due to mass closures and conversions, the neighborhood school is no more in New Orleans.

Both critics and supporters of charter school based reform wish it were not so. Principals wish they could draw on students from the neighborhood, and policy makers hold out the promise that once all schools are high quality, families will no longer have to choose schools that are across the city. But, I suspect it will not be so easy or possible to resurrect the neighborhood school, because the neighborhood itself has been unsettled. As researchers, activists, and journalists have shown, a combination of massive disinvestment in and destruction of public housing and sharp rent increases have redistributed the population of New Orleans. While the city "only" went from 67 to 60 percent black after Katrina, this obscures the redistribution of the black population within the city towards East New Orleans, and the fact that the youth population dropped from anywhere between a third and a half of its Pre-Katrina levels. Yes, I'm sure something could be worked out to create some vision of community schools in the future, but the kinds of communities that my informants discuss and revere don't really exist anymore, or perhaps less strongly, they have been profoundly altered and dispersed.

Before the start of the following school year, the new principal at Devon's school organized a canvassing trip for teachers, so they would better understand the communities their students lived in and their unseen vectors of transit. Teachers were split into teams, each responsible for driving to each stop on one of a dozen different school bus routes taken by their students, going to many different parts of town. I accompanied a group whose route took us through St. Claude and the Lower 9th Ward. I have to admit that I was excited when I heard about this activity as I had already taken a keen interest in busing earlier in my field work. I was hoping this canvassing would open up a whole world of spatialized community engagement.

Ultimately, I was disappointed by the banality of the whole endeavor, though in ways that may be instructive.

More than anything else, our trip became an exercise in "checking for danger". It seemed like there wasn't much else to do besides typical co-worker banter. In the middle of the day, most of the bus stops were devoid of activity. Knowing the community here became risk assessment. Given the dangers that traffic has posed to students in the city, this isn't an unreasonable focus, but it also poses as a particularly thin kind of community knowledge. While I had conceived of this activity as an ethnographically rich excursion in mapping the spatial trajectories of school choice, for the teachers in the Chevy with me it was still another work day. As interesting as some of the sights could have been, this was also an opportunity to soldier, to roll one's eyes at the new management's attempts to build community when they hadn't quite won everyone's trust. It was also an opportunity to capture artifacts of authentic New Orleans culture for some. Many groups returned to the cafeteria for debriefing slurping on sno-balls. The new principal playfully chided my group for neglecting to seek them out. I found the whole business weird, but it was quite hot that day and I may have found relief in a disposable vessel filled with ice, sugar, and food coloring.

If students are accustomed to moving through the city on buses, even in extended and modified routes, the educators of the school, most of them from markedly different social classes than their students also have a ritualistic comfort with how to anthropologically engage the low income communities their students serve. The system of parent choice has necessitated a transportation infrastructure which both tracks patterns of racialized housing infrastructure and calls upon multiple forms of racial expertise, from the validation and verification of a Nicky to the engagements of teachers checking out bus stops. Recent historical work has claimed that

school segregation in New Orleans was not a response to either so-called natural or planned residential segregation (Stern 2014). Rather, commitments to segregated schools drove construction of segregated communities at first within the city and then throughout the suburbs and metropolitan area. While education reformers have imagined that Hurricane Katrina had created a tabula rasa for them to remake public education in the city and ultimately the nation, the remains of segregation have powerfully constrained and frustrated their efforts.

What I would suggest here though, is that these remains are not only material, school buildings, housing projects, freeways, transportation systems. These remains are also composed of modes of engagement and circulation. Racial segregation is not merely accomplished by the fact of buildings and infrastructures; it is realized through ritualized movement. The frustrations of school transportation in contemporary New Orleans may have as much to do with durable ways of moving through cities and with race as they do with efficient planning and collaboration. These ways of being in the segregated city are not only the provenance of my informants; they also belong to the anthropologist. I think part of why I was so disappointed with the canvassing trip was because I thought, "Finally! I'm going to see some real communities and community building". But this comforting and authentic experience evaded me because it wasn't there. We've not only lost the urban neighborhood as a home, or a font of cultural strength and authenticity, but as a privileged site of anthropological analysis.

CHAPTER 4

PITCHING AS PRAXIS: HOW ENTREPRENEURS ARE DESIGNING RACE IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

"What if we had Foundations?"

I had been shadowing Riley here and there over the course of my fieldwork. Riley was a well-regarded social studies teacher at one of New Orleans higher performing No Excuses charter schools, winning or receiving nominations for several teaching awards. Frustrated with the discipline and pedagogy of their school, Riley consulted with mentors and decided to strike out on their own. While they could have trained at any number of programs which would have placed them as a school leader at an established charter school network, Riley decided to strike out on their own and try to craft a more rooted and experimental model of schooling, Foundations Academy.

I first heard Riley practice their pitch with the full force of their rhetorical reputation in July 2014 before a crowd of a couple dozen peers practicing their pitches for various school models and entrepreneurial projects at Incubator. The question, "What if we had Foundations?" is both tinged with regret and hopeful for the future, as forthcoming analysis of the pitch will demonstrate. It reflects the temporal pivot that many educators and education reformers in New Orleans found themselves within as I conducted my fieldwork in the 2013-14 school year. The unprecedented remaking of the New Orleans school system after Hurricane Katrina is approaching ten years old, and the tabula rasa upon which pro-charter reformers had projected their visions of a district entirely composed of a privately managed portfolio of schools had become a mirror. As opposed to the immediate period after the levee failures, the recent past of

schooling could no longer be described in terms of the nightmares of chapter 1. Reformers had to answer for their own records and reckon with the consequences. One of the architects of reform, Madison, decided in 2011 that charter based reform was becoming ossified and created Incubator in order to cultivate "innovative" and "entrepreneurial" solutions and futures for schooling in New Orleans. Riley came to Incubator hoping to conjure a school to come out of their regrets and disappointments with reform as well as their frustrations with their intolerable present.

Before getting to that question straddling both sides of a temporal dilemma Riley rooted their motivations for designing Foundations in the trauma of a student lost,

> (Picture of a smiling student on the Powerpoint deck). Morris was a student I taught two years ago. He was reading at a first grade reading level, but he said every day "I'm going to COLLEGE!" His friends laughed at him because he was very poor. He came from a broken home. In the spring semester of his 8th grade year, Morris was murdered… (Cut to picture of body bag on a gurney).
>
> At his funeral, they read the results of his 8th grade tests, and the results indicated that he was on track to receive TOPS, which in Louisiana is a scholarship, full ride, to a public institution. If Morris had lived, he was on his way to "going to college". On the right, we have Jason (pulls up picture of another smiling student), this was another student at our school who ended up being expelled. A year later, he was found to be the person that murdered Morris.
>
> What often happens is that students like Morris and students like Jason bombard the headlines and they get defined as the problem, not as the solution to our city. It's a problem… The issue here is when we don't involve students in being the solution to our city, but instead they are constantly defined as the problem. Reform becomes a thing that happens to them as opposed to a thing where they happen to it.
>
> After Katrina and at the time that Morris was murdered, several foundations and local ones, came to Nola, there were hundreds of millions of dollars to stop the violence in Nola, like Ceasefire. But what if we allocated those resources to training students to be the agents of change. What if we empower students to be the drivers of innovation and the uplift and rebuilding that needs to happen in this city
>
> What if we had Foundations?

Later in this chapter, I will analyze the rest of this pitch and the way it changed for different audiences and occasions. What is important to note here however, is Riley's motivation for developing Foundations and their characterization of the central problem with Post Katrina education reform. In other versions of this pitch, Riley explicitly wonders what a school could have done to prevent Morris' murder or rather, what kind of school to come could prevent violence against students like Morris by inspiring students to lead other kinds of lives. Riley worked at a successful school when their student Morris was murdered. Riley was a highly regarded teacher, praised for both their pedagogy and their ability to connect to students through shared racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Nevertheless, Riley was haunted by the fact that neither the long hours of preparation and relationship building nor the home visits and Tupac inspired personal essays on their classroom wall were able to prevent Morris' death in any way.

Riley's diagnosis? Charter schools and education reformers didn't view the almost entirely black student body as assets, but rather as problems to be managed. This rhetorical turn in Riley's pitch can be read as a potent critique of what many have called the neoliberal character of charter based education reform. However, this dissatisfaction is rooted in the practical experience of teaching for years in New Orleans charter schools rather than perusing Jacobin Magazine or reading David Harvey.[1] Riley often expressed to me that one of the most frustrating parts of teaching in a No Excuses charter school was the constant focus on classroom management and discipline. No Excuses charter schools have a well-documented focus on strict discipline and punitive accountability, receiving praise from some but protest and pushback from many quarters. As a proponent of charter based reform, Riley nevertheless poses that one of its

[1] This isn't a dig. It's meant to illustrate that Riley is not making this critique from a leftist position. Nevertheless it evokes left critique of neoliberal managerialism.

central issues is the way that it treats students as objects of administration, rather than as collaborators or initiators of educational and community projects. In making this critique, Riley marks a central cleavage among education reformers that continued to develop over the course of my field work, between the managerial and administrative focus of the major charter school networks and foundations, and the collaborative and entrepreneurial focus of a small but growing group of reformers tied to Incubator.

What Riley lays the foundation for in the preceding excerpt is a recasting of the "problem-space" of education reform in Post-Katrina New Orleans, in the sense that David Scott uses the term. Scott uses "problem-space" as a tool for conceptualizing political temporalities and defines them thusly,

> A "problem-space," in my usage, is meant first of all to demarcate a discursive context, a context of language. But it is more than a cognitively intelligible arrangement of concepts, ideas, images, meanings, and so on-though it is certainly this. It is a context of argument and, therefore, one of intervention. A problem-space, in other words, is an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political stakes) hangs. That is to say, what defines this discursive context are not only the particular problems that get posed as problems as such (the problem of "race," say), but the particular questions that seem worth asking and the kinds of answers that seem worth having. Notice, then, that a problem-space is very much a context of dispute, a context of rival views, a context, if you like, of knowledge and power. But from within the terms of any given problem-space what is in dispute, what the argument is effectively about, is not itself being argued over. Notice also that a problem-space necessarily has a temporal dimension or, rather, is a fundamentally temporal concept. Problem-spaces alter historically because problems are not timeless and do not have everlasting shapes (Scott 2004).

Incubator and its participants like Riley do not dispute the core reformer ideal that schools can be the fundamental lever for resolving racial and socioeconomic inequality, nor the central project of remaking and intervening in the New Orleans public schools. Incubator and the entrepreneurial wing of reformers are reframing the problem-space of reform by suggesting not

only that new questions be posed about schooling, but that they be posed within a new information economy organized under the rubric of "design thinking". These shifts are rooted in both the racialized violence and politics of schooling in New Orleans and the temporal impasse experienced by reformers as their engagements with the city become extended.

By posing students like Morris and Jason as solutions, rather than problems, Riley both criticizes the managerial/administrative ethos of No Excuses style reform and puts forward one of the pillars of design thinking, that of being user-centered. As we'll see, the design thinking wing of education reform views the constituents of schools as collaborators and users in a process of experimentation and innovation towards developing better schools. This is not a bloodless and colorless intervention into school reform agendas. Riley and others at Incubator were inspired to embrace user-centeredness and design thinking coming out of experiences of a highly racialized character, whether it be the violence faced by their students, or reckoning with their own racial identities as they plan a future in the city. By recasting the problem-space of reform as one of experiment and innovation, they also rearticulate the material terrain upon which the racial politics of reform are elaborated and reconstructed.

Youthfulness has been a powerful organizing principle for the work of education reformers at the level of ideology, fantasy, and workplace culture, as discussed in chapter 2. However, it also creates temporal binds for reformers and educators that stay in the city for longer that the two or three years typical of recruits from alternative certification organizations. It has become stultifying for a selection of educators who have shifted from short term transients to transplants of an indefinite but longer duree. This chapter also poses that Incubator's focus on futurity and innovation serve as a means of "growing up" and settlement. The "design" and "pitching" of the future of school work as racial assemblages, attempts to find a way out of the

seemingly irresolvable conflicts of the past and the impasse of the present and simultaneously fit in to and construct a New Orleans yet to be. These assemblages don't erase the past, but recognize a limited version of it, put it in its place, and move quickly to lay claim to the future. It is critical that we attend to the ways that the shifting temporal rhythms of reform are prompting re-evaluations of racial and civic belonging as New Orleans reform and reformers shift from the immediacy of crisis to an enduring encounter.

Ethnographically, this chapter attends to two faces of a site where the experimental cultures of New Orleans reform are subject to revisions and reconsiderations of what it means to be "truly innovative". This site, which I refer to as Incubator, focuses on "creating education entrepreneurs" through the development of curriculum and competitions of various lengths and intensities, drawing on educators both locally and nationally. The leaders of Incubator and the participants became dissatisfied with the No Excuses models dominant among New Orleans charter schools. Though they were committed to market oriented reforms, their business inspiration comes from observing Silicon Valley "lean startup" and "design thinking" methodologies in the budding New Orleans tech sector. In particular, I focus on two aspects of experimentation and future making at Incubator. First, I discuss the principles of design thinking, experimentation, and innovation that drive the entrepreneurs at Incubator, attending to the ways that the recast the problem-space of education reform. Second, I examine the experiences of young educators in the development and deployment of pitches, 2-5 minute performances of aspirational articulation of entrepreneurial ventures to crowds varying from other participants to funders, media, and community members. These ritualistic performances, and the preparation, iteration, and revision of them over time provide key evidence of the manner in which these young education entrepreneurs in-the-making both imagine and call into being the future of not

only “school”, but school in a particular vision of a potential New Orleans. These moves emerge in the context of a critical pivot not away from, but alongside dominant education reform, giving us crucial grounds for comprehending how the future is made through simultaneous disappointment with and then iterative recommitment to what are perceived as flawed ideological projects.

Pivoting towards the Future

“What high school you went to?” Where once this question was an invitation to bond over shared communal ties or exchange friendly japes over traditional rivalries, the evocation of one’s “alma mater” calls upon a more fraught repertoire of affective responses and fragmented lineages. After the state seized control of the vast majority of public schools in fall 2005, many of these schools were closed, turned over to new operators, or changed names altogether (Frederick Douglass High School, which was once named after Confederate officer Francis T. Nicholls, is now KIPP Renaissance for example), to the chagrin of many alumni and community members despite the celebrations in other circles.[2] Along with the dismantling of local attendance zones, these governance changes would remarkably alter what it meant for a school to have local or community ties. Will future generations of New Orleanians look so fondly about their connections to the comparatively anodyne appellations ascribed to their charter schools, signs like success, sci, or renew? How will transplants enter into these lineages as they have children if membership is seen as a marker of civic belonging?

Fall 2014 marked a major threshold in the history of public education in New Orleans. After seizing control of nearly ninety percent of schools under local control in 2005 (around 110

[2] However, recently schools have begun to denote the historical lineage of the building even if they don’t take on the name, such as the X network school at the Y historical name building.

schools total), the state run Recovery School District (RSD) turned over all of these schools, buildings, and their successors to charter management organizations. The RSD will no longer directly run schools in New Orleans and will shrink from 568 to 92 employees. While a handful of schools still remain under the control of the Orleans Parish School Board, the RSD will now oversee an entirely chartered district. What was early depicted as an audacious experiment has now become the status quo, and some of those who came in as outsiders have become more rooted in their adopted city. There have been numerous popular and scholarly accounts of the waves of volunteers, entrepreneurs, religious organizations, philanthropists, etc. that descended upon New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Many accounts praise the massive investment of time and energy by outsiders into helping the city recover while others have expressed grave concern that the city became a site for profiteering as well as neoliberal political and economic restructuring. Local citizens were not passive in the face of this influx, and journalists have encouraged us to pay attention to the flowering of civic participation in community and activist organizations during the recovery period (Flaherty 2010). Anthropologists have also pointed out the ways that the focus on recovery by religious and private voluntarism and entrepreneurship were signs of a neoliberal reordering of citizenship and political subjectivity (Adams 2013). Regardless of their assessment of recovery efforts, these examinations of the Post-Katrina period overwhelmingly focus on the dynamic of locals vs outsiders/transients. My fieldwork experiences, nine years after the storm, with outsiders whose stay in New Orleans were becoming more prolonged show transplantation to be an underappreciated problem, one whose analysis could benefit from thinking through logics of settlement as much as extraction and exploitation.

In fieldwork encounters with educators both critical and friendly to charters, I observed frequent discussion of what it meant for the educational workforce of the city to be so much younger, whiter, and transplanted than before Act 35. At education think tanks, researchers and administrators would look at teacher hiring and retention data and try to figure out how to deal with their diversity problems. At an activist group of young transplant teachers, I shadowed throughout the year, they would try to figure out strategies for alternative pedagogies and discipline systems and try to learn about local histories. While the demographic profile of charter school employment in the city is complex and evolving, the ideal type and object of reflection was a young white woman from an elite college out of town, marked by their foreignness and their transience. At many charter school networks in the city, including the sites where I conducted most of my observations, this was indeed the profile of the majority of their teachers. They were assumed to be civic outsiders whose stay in New Orleans will be of an indefinite but short duration. Multiple principals half-jokingly spoke to me about the ways they had learned to become matchmakers for their primarily white female staff. They had seen too many of these teachers leave town because they felt they could not find long term partners in the city of New Orleans as they approached an age where they felt greater pressure to be married, indexing the kinds of racial and class stratification that persist even for those engaged in daily work with low income black communities. Within reform circles these transplants have been praised for their ostensibly transformative effects on student achievement, narrowly defined through test based accountability, as well as creating hope (for some) for educational progress. Nevertheless, even full throated supporters and enablers of charter school reform have come to regard the demographic composition of their movements as a problem going forward, as discussed in chapter 1 in terms of "teacher pipelines".

Compared to the heady first years following Act 35, education reformers in New Orleans have begun to pay more attention to issues of cultural identity and authenticity, typically under the rubric of diversity, as analyzed in chapters 1 and 3. In 2015, Teach for America touted a dramatic increase in the number of corps members of color as a result of a shifting of priorities towards deeper community engagement such as partnerships with local Historically Black Colleges and Universities. During my fieldwork a newly established school, developed at Incubator, focused on attracting a racially and economically diverse student body, no small feat in an overwhelmingly black district where the few white students are clustered in a small number of high performing and selective schools. Madison, the head of Incubator, began teaching a class on the history of education that includes titles ranging from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to *The Education of Blacks in the South* by James Anderson. There were also new programs tailored to specifically develop school leaders of color and native to New Orleans, in the style of the Broad Residency.

All of these shifts and programs mark a departure from the style of reform shepherded by RSD Superintendent Paul Vallas in the early years after Hurricane Katrina, when schools and networks were primarily concerned with basic functions and schools were run with heavier direction from central authorities with less concern for community input or connection. Vallas was primarily concerned with bringing in the "best", stating, "If you have superior curriculum and instructional knowledge. If you are able to recruit the best and the brightest. Half the teachers in this district… are in their twenties. They're from many of the elite universities. They bring great content area mastery and energy. They think a 180-day school year is a part time job. That's the reason we've been able to lengthen our school year to 11 months, our school day to 8.5 hours." These kinds of statements reflect the fortress scholastic mentality of many charter school

networks, which propose the charter school as a beacon/shelter from the pernicious influences students of color face in low income and segregated communities. In many ways they proposed to create charter schools as a kind of "gated community", which anthropologists have argued are an explicitly racialized territorializing technique (Low 2003). During my fieldwork, and particularly at Incubator, I encountered reformers who were ready to look out from the school, to look at students and their communities differently and beginning to question their relationship to the city and its racial politics.

In fall 2013 I had an uncanny experience while attending workshops on consecutive days. The first was led by Kerry, whose network is known for a strict commitment to a No Excuses style school model while the second was led by a group of young transplant educators who are critical of dominant reform models, some of whom who had taught at Kerry's school. Both workshops started with the question, "What is culture?" From there followed widely divergent conversations. At the first workshop, we pored over charts schematizing the relationships between symbols, cultural practices, and group belonging. We discussed how to wield our structural understanding of culture to make school both more like a church and a gang. Kerry told us, "If schools don't provide kids with a sense of something bigger than themselves, they will find it elsewhere," and that the same goes for adults at the school. At the second workshop, the group suggested some definitional parameters to culture initially, but then the participants moved to naming specific New Orleans cultural practices. "What is culture?" It's a second line parade, red beans and rice on Mondays, your high school, the way you talk, and music. Culture in this workshop was anchored in history and territorial specificity. Both workshops were rooted in the idea that schools had to be culturally authentic spaces for children, differing primarily in the source and process of authenticity. Both spaces were occupied by educators attempting to

figure out ways to fashion themselves and their schools as spaces truer to the cultural needs of students.

In both spaces we can see examples of white educators carrying out racialized interpretive labor (Hartigan 2000) to figure out how they and their students would belong within their schools and communities. It's easy to be skeptical of the kinds of race and diversity talk that happen in these primarily white spaces. Researchers have considered the ways that workshops and programs on race can overly focus on the psycho-social needs of white participants and reinforce and re-inscribe dominant identities. However, like assessments of teachers discussed in chapter 1, such dismissals employ too reductive a sense of the efficacy and productivity of these discourses and settings. If we think of race in terms of racecraft, paying attention to the ritualistic productivity of these sessions and discussions, we should appreciate them as essential facets of the always multiple racial reconstructions of post-Katrina New Orleans. Indeed, in these considerations of race and diversity at charter schools, non-profits, community organizations, and in particular the edu-businesses emerging from Incubator we can discern the development of novel racial assemblages. If we take to heart the essential productivity of the interpretive labor conducted in these settings we can pay greater attention to the ways that places like Incubator are constructing new material and ontological foundations for the genesis, maintenance, and reconstruction of racial assemblages through their entrepreneurial experiments.

While these workshops and strategic shifts are operating in the face of the supposed inauthenticity, transience, and outsider-ness of education reformers, this chapter is motivated by the question of what happens when transients become transplants, when they dig in for the long(er) haul and try to become what they perceive to be more authentically engaged with New Orleans culture and community. How are their efforts assembling and reconstructing novel

ontologies of race? Certainly, much of the talent brought in by Act 35 has washed in and out of town, but significant players remain, have had children, bought homes, and changed roles within education. While so many of these folks are transient, we also have to ask ourselves, "What happens when they stay?" What kinds of roots do transplants set down, what are the techniques of translation and articulation that facilitate transitions from inauthentic outsiders to something more anxious and ambiguous, if not quite local? New Orleans is a fruitful place for exploring this question, as its purportedly unique cultural qualities are not drawn from mystical native essences, but in part from its role as a port city and center of trade and the histories of absorbing outsiders in the local fabric. If charter based reforms do endure, it will not be because they ignore or destroy local customs, but because they engage, recognize, master, and transform the markers of what it means for schools to be connected to New Orleans communities. This process would be a continuation, rather than a disruption of historical patterns of recognition and patronage in the city (Reed 2011).

Youthful transplants will probably never be able to justify themselves through the temporal lens of authentic belonging, but their speculative rituals and future making ventures may shift the terrain in ways that allow them to make a place for themselves in a future New Orleans, or rather make New Orleans a place in line with their visions of the future.

Genesis

As I sat in the office of the ed-tech startup Incubator waiting to speak with Madison, I was reminded of my native San Francisco, or at least what it has become. The bicycles tucked neatly in the storage room, the fridge stocked with Bud Light and bottled water, the open offices and varied meeting spaces, the glass, the white people, the black person, the walls covered in dry

erase paint and marker, the reading nook, the laptops leisurely resting upon couch cushions and lacquered desks, the free food from the mediocre New Orleans Mexican restaurant that my informants nonetheless love, the brief smiles and head nods, the big flat screen with the video camera, the flyers and sign-up sheets, the sunlight peeking through large windows, the bright colors - everywhere, the modular furniture in grey hues, the comfort, the concentration, the conversations, the visitors, the plaid shirts and smart blazers, the iPhones and Androids, the mottos emblazoned on arms in black and white portraits - "don't suck less"!…they all felt out of place and familiar at the same time. That this time-space disjuncture could be conjured and ported into New Orleans is a testament to the diffuse vectors of market based reform.

I was supposed to meet with Madison at noon but I made the rookie mistake of not confirming the appointment in the morning. I showed up early and the CEO was nowhere to be seen. When Madison finally arrived an hour later, they packed away their bicycle, grabbed a bottle of water, and made time for the embarrassed ethnographer. Sometimes just swallowing your pride and waiting around can get you what you need.

What did Madison think was the most important thing to talk to me about? Kids. Not the discursive kids that "it's all about" for those who work in education, or "our kids" in our schools and classrooms that we work so hard for, but Madison's literal progeny, born after years of working to create charter schools for other people's children. Madison confidently asserted,

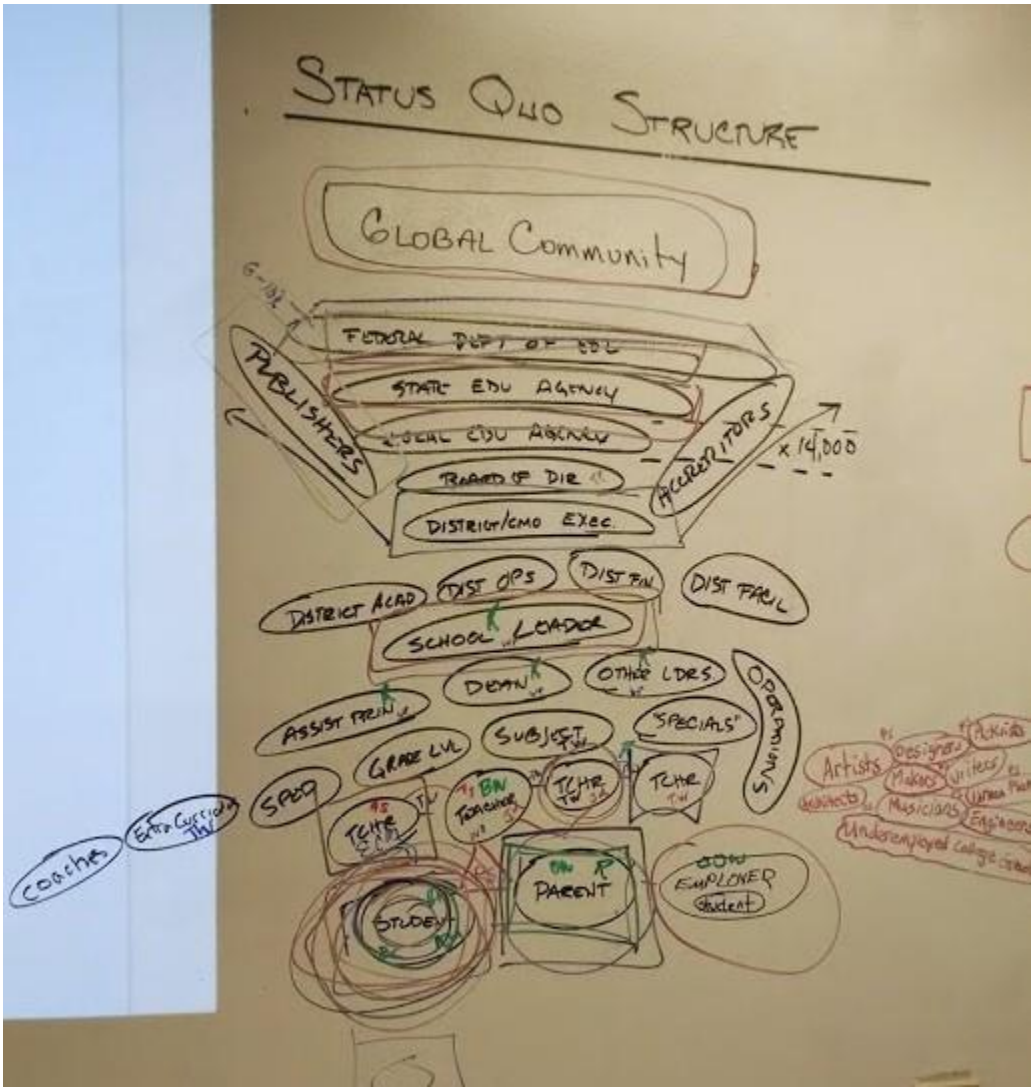
> Look Christien, the most important thing happening in education reform in New Orleans right now is what happens when all these reformers have kids… When I had my kids and they became school aged, my whole worldview changed. My peers and I faced a moral crisis. I realized how arrogant I had been, acting as if I knew what was good for other people's kids. If I'm a user, I'm acting differently…

Madison then tells me about one of his colleagues at Incubator, who "told me that once he had his own children, he realized that some of the models he had been trumpeting for most of his life

were not flexible enough for his kids. He decided to create a school that provided that flexibility." This school would be one of the first developed at Incubator. Like his colleague, Madison's crisis-inspired revelation implies that after having children, the prospect of them entering the kinds of schools they had been responsible for, with strict discipline and extreme racial and class segregation, seemed unthinkable. This frank mea culpa seemed refreshing early in my fieldwork, but I would soon realize that I wasn't a privileged confidant. I would later hear others associated with Incubator tell a similar story with different inflections. An informant would tell me the story about reformers having kids and how it changed their minds and I would ask, "were you talking to Madison?" or one of Madison's colleagues, and invariably the answer would be yes. In a press interview Madison reflected, "I spent the first half of my career mistakenly thinking I knew exactly how to improve schools…" As sincere a reflection as this may have been, it also seemed to be part of a coordinated messaging strategy. The story was common enough to even provoke a sharply worded response from a manager at another education non-profit when they were asked about it, "You think of the influx of do-gooders, from Bergen county or something, making 40,000 dollars a year, looking around like, well, I'm not sending my kid to Newman or Country Day, where do I send my kid? A lot of the reformers would say, well, you should just send them to my fucking school, because I'm running a good public school and you should just send them to my school!"

In a public interview Madison reflected on the motivation for Incubator stating, "New Orleans wasn't thinking about the future. We were only thinking about recovery… (Incubator is) all about the future of good education." Once Madison became a user of schooling, the entire temporal structure of their engagement with reform changed.

Figure 2. "The Status Quo Structure"



Madison's educational weltanschauung changed once they and their closest colleagues started thinking like *users*. This particular word was commonly used by folks at Incubator, and should be distinguished from other subjective interfaces with schools and schooling. A user is not the same as a constituent, a community member, a consumer, a parent, a voter, a citizen or any other number of ways that people have engaged with educations systems. This notion of the user comes directly from Madison's affinity for and observations of the growing tech entrepreneur scene in post-Katrina New Orleans and embrace of design thinking as a

methodology for improving education. Madison started Incubator to make schools better by creating an infrastructure for producing "innovators" and "innovation". Dissatisfied with the charter school models they had propagated, Madison thought the reform agenda had become too sclerotic and bureaucratic. At each of the "pitch night" events I observed in New Orleans and New York City where budding entrepreneurs would present their ideas for new school models, services, and technologies, Madison would discuss at length the critical need for educators to be more "user-centered" using a chart titled "Status Quo Structure" (see figure 1).

I attended one of the training sessions for entrepreneurs conducted by Incubator where Madison was still developing his own pitch around the problem with the status quo in education. Before Madison rolled out a computer generated graphic with a cleaner version of the chart pictured in figure 1, they started by asking the entrepreneurs gathered in the office who the constituents of public education were. Inscribing disparate communities on the dry erase wall they worked their way from students and parents to educators to policy makers all the way up to the "global community". Madison asked for any additions to the chart, which is where the pink colored section on the bottom right comes in with subjects like "artists" and "makers". Madison asked the group, "what do we notice about the status quo?" The group ventured several responses as Madison led them to the desired insight. Look at how top heavy this chart is! See how buried students and parents are underneath the sprawling institutional labyrinth above! Madison aggressively draws circles around the word student. This is where we focus our energies at Incubator. The user is at the center of our strategy.

Like Riley, Madison's turn towards a new vision of education reform hinged upon their reconceptualization of the relationship between students and schools. Riley's haunted reflection upon their inability to prevent violence between and towards their students as well as their

empathy for the ways their students were stereotyped and disregarded by popular discourse led them to commit to the idea that students could be central participants in guiding the reform of schooling. Madison experienced a different kind of regret as they realized the kinds of schools they had created for poor black children were not good enough for their own. Both resolved that education reformers needed have a different way of relating to the students and communities. There have been numerous philosophies and movements of community schooling throughout the history of public education in America. Why would Incubator embrace design thinking specifically as a means of addressing their dissatisfactions, and what distinguishes it from other forms of engagement? Furthermore, how does design thinking allow for a restructuring of the problem space of education reform and provide an infrastructure for racial assemblages?

Designing the Future of School

> *The design process is what puts Design Thinking into action. It's a structured approach to generating and evolving ideas. It has five phases that help navigate the development from identifying a design challenge to finding and building a solution. It's a* ***deeply human*** *approach that relies on your ability to be intuitive, to interpret what you observe and to develop ideas that are emotionally meaningful to those you are designing for—all skills you are well versed in as an educator.*
>
> \- *IDEO Handbook on Design Thinking*

Madison and Incubator have trained several cohorts of educators a year with short and long term modules meant to inculcate the entrepreneurial prowess to intervene in education at multiple scales, from reading programs to entire schools. The incubator draws its inspiration from Silicon Valley startup culture as well as the budding startup scene in New Orleans itself,

claiming that “design thinking” and “empathy principles” provide a counterpoint to the institutional cultures of contemporary New Orleans charters. Their model tries to create education entrepreneurs who are “user centered”, who are not afraid of failure, and can “prototype” their ideas quickly and cheaply and reiterate based on feedback from users and peers. The office walls are covered in brightly colored post-its, butcher paper, and marker scribbles which are constantly reshuffled, rewritten, and discarded. While market reform oriented politicians characterized the problem of New Orleans public schools as essentially managerial in 2005, Incubator poses design and engineering as the key problem 5-10 years later. Design, as opposed to management, entails a different structure of temporality and relationality.

The standard design thinking protocol taught at Incubator contains five steps. The steps of “Discovery, Interpretation, Ideation, Experimentation, and Evolution” are typically discussed in value neutral terms that play up the technical utility of design thinking for educators. However, when design thinking is examined in practice in the offices and entrepreneurial ventures of Incubator, we can see that it is also a means of assimilating racial experience into an information economy, and is thus acting as a kind of racial assemblage. These protocols are a highly technical way of framing the racial and class schisms that have emerged amongst changes Post-Katrina school governance. Incubator wouldn’t shy away from the racialized character of this rift between management, design, and user, but the reliance on design thinking poses that the problem is ultimately about the allocation and circulation of information, transforming a political problem into a technical one.

The discovery and interpretation phases of a design thinking protocol entail in depth ethnographic research into the problem faced by the designer, first by using participant observation to gather data and then storytelling to share and reflect. For example, one participant

in the summer training program I observed in 2014 was a teacher named Mackenzie who wanted to leverage parents to improve student reading levels. In the sessions and in their pitches they described how they realized after talking to parents and looking at studies that low income parents spent a great deal of time reading to their children, but did not use pedagogically effective strategies for consolidating learning outcomes. Each one of these stages contains its own loops as these observations became influenced by sharing with colleagues and other parents. This ethnographic data is used as the foundation for the design of small scale prototypes which are tested with "users" or "the community". McKenzie came up with the idea to include packets paired with books that included pedagogical instructions for how parents could reinforce learning objectives. User and designer feedback is then reviewed and incorporated into future prototypes until a satisfactory solution is arrived at. McKenzie's pilot was well received by parents and colleagues at Incubator, requiring less drastic adjustments than other pilots. The idea had an elegant simplicity to it and only required minor alterations to the content packets before McKenzie began to draw interest in funding the idea at pitch nights.

McKenzie's process illustrates how the design process can work to solve a straightforward learning problem, but also how design thinking is supposed to mitigate the racialized marginalization of contemporary schooling. When McKenzie narrated the genesis of their idea, they talked about one student in particular who struggled with reading. McKenzie attempted to talk to this student's parents about reading to them at night and the parents became frustrated, saying, "We do practice reading! We say our ABC's every night!". There was always a pause after this quote, as the educators in the room implicitly understood this to be a tragic marker of the inadequacy of the parents pedagogical know how in the face of their enthusiasm. The key here is to understand how McKenzie uses this story to emphasize how the design

process led them to consider the parents as a source of intelligence on student learning in ways they and by extension other educators had not considered. The mostly black and low income students McKenzie served were assumed to have parents that were not as involved in supplementary academic activities, but the design protocol revealed through collaboration that they were ostensibly ineffective and unknowledgeable, not uncommitted or unenthused. The design process ostensibly can not only generate solutions, but create the kinds of racialized solidarities that had been suppressed by dominant modes of education reform.

Design thinking has been described as "as an analytic and creative process that engages a person in opportunities to experiment, create and prototype models, gather feedback, and redesign" (Razzouk and Shute 2012). IDEO, which provides toolkits utilized at times by Incubator, describes its application for educators thusly,

> Design thinking is a creative act and lets teachers understand that the act of creating a really effective learning environment is an art that is both reflective and intentional. If we want to change education and learning to make it more relevant, more effective and more enjoyable for all involved, teachers need to be the entrepreneurial designers and re-designers of the "systems" of schools and of the schools themselves.

IDEO repeatedly emphasizes that design thinking is a "mindset" as a well as a tool and process. It's worth scrutinizing the principle elements of this mindset in order to understand how they might generate a new problem-space for education reform in New Orleans.

"It's Human-Centered. Design Thinking begins from deep empathy and understanding of needs and motivations of people—in this case, the students, teachers, parents, staff and administrators who make up your everyday world.

It's Collaborative. Several great minds are always stronger when solving a challenge than just one. Design Thinking benefits greatly from the views of multiple perspectives, and others' creativity bolstering your own."

Both Riley and Madison's pitches involved a realization of the ways that education reform and their own actions within it were centered on hierarchies and abstractions removed from the subjects most directly impacted by their work. On the surface, this is a perspective that is easy to sympathize with. Public education systems have dehumanized poor black children and communities for their entire existence and charter based reform in New Orleans in particular has been accused of circumventing democratic control of schools, imposing punitive discipline structures, and over-valuing test based accountability metrics. Considering the perspectives of students on their education, even as users, is a marginal improvement in respect and regard from the ways they are treated by many no-excuses charter schools. This is not a slander against the sincerity and intention of educators working in a No Excuses model. Rather I make the point to merely mark the difference between an approach to running schools that regards students and parents as experts in their own right against another which has a track record of viewing educational expertise as the privileged province of the credentialed.

I observed Riley as they conducted small scale pilots of the Foundations school model and they took very seriously the feedback and perspectives of students. One day during the summer of 2014, I (somewhat ineptly) conducted a mini-lesson for several of Riley's students on ethnography and interviewing techniques as part of a longer term experiment in integrating ethnographic discovery into the future school's curriculum. Students took turns role-playing as interviewer and interviewee and discussed their perspectives on education reform in the city.

Afterwards, Riley posed questions to them about what they learned and how they might change the lesson for future sessions, such as "As a student, how would you know you are getting better?" and "Could a class look like what we just did?" Again, Riley's regard for student perspectives is laudable. However, I would venture that many or even most teachers in New Orleans charter schools and schools around the country have this kind of respect for their students. Riley recognized this, telling me, "Our schools aren't structured in a way in which they're able to listen to kids." The difference for Riley is the epistemological framework that follows from Incubator's embrace of design thinking.

The crucial difference between Incubator and other educators in New Orleans isn't whether or not they respect students, it's that they believe them to be collaborative knowledge producers in the first place. The user is a category primarily of knowledge production and design thinking's key difference from No Excuses approach is in how it approaches students as generators of data. Both camps embrace the usage of data for tracking and improving schooling. However, whereas No Excuses schools primarily see the data generated by students as a passive outcome of academic preparation, design thinkers see users as reflective and dynamic generators of qualitative and quantitative data. Of course in any No Excuses charter school, students are consistently giving reflective and dynamic data to teachers all the time in the form of disobedience or enthusiasm for lessons and requests for supplementary projects and teachers respond to these. However, I contend that these tactical engagements with students are fundamentally different from an approach with a systematic epistemological philosophy about these interactions. In principle and in execution, design thinking poses that anthropological knowledge production is a fundamental step in designing better products and systems. Furthermore, this knowledge production is not solely focused on generating qualitative data, but

a cycle of iterative encounters, hence the focus on collaboration together with human/user-centeredness.

"It's Experimental. Design Thinking gives you permission to fail and to learn from your mistakes, because you come up with new Ideas, get feedback on them, then iterate Given the range of needs your students have, your work will never be finished or "solved" It is always in progress. Yet there is an underlying expectation that educators must strive for perfection, that they may not make mistakes, that they should always be flawless role models This kind of expectation makes it hard to take risks. It limits the possibilities to create more radical change. But educators need to experiment, too, and Design Thinking is all about learning by doing."

-IDEO

Madison is a harsh critic of risk aversion in education reform as an impediment to innovation. Madison doesn't blame administrators and teachers for being conservative and focusing on "what works". The stakes are very high and urgent in the work that they do. For Madison, the problem with post-Katrina education reform is perhaps that it was too large scale, too expansive, and took on too much responsibility in trying to wipe the slate clean, not allowing for lower stakes engagements with students. After all, the original idea for charter schools was for teachers to run small scale pedagogical experiments which would filter out to other schools, not for them to be the entire system (Kahlenberg and Potter 2014). Madison believes that charter schools have strayed from that mission, due to structural pressures saying, "When you look around the country at the charter sector, they've been pretty absent from the conversation about innovative school design… charter leaders are more likely to ask, "Is the authorizer going to punish me if this model doesn't work?" This is one of the reasons that Incubator has focused on fostering micro-schools, including Foundations, where school leaders like Riley test out their

school models with first year cohorts of 15 students or less. Madison's critique of the conservativeness of education reform at a system level won't change the fact that New Orleans veteran teaching corps was decimated and fired after Hurricane Katrina, nor will it return the majority of schools to local democratic control. However, the traction that Incubator has gained to conduct small scale education experiments with new school models and entrepreneurial ventures does add a new scalar dimension to the always multiple reform project.

Madison and Incubator are intensely focused on providing an infrastructure for educators to make "small bets" in order to promote experimentation and innovation. Madison want to know,

> "How can we make as many smart $10, $100, $1,000 and $10,000 bets on promising ideas and promising entrepreneurs as we can? How can investors help push the idea forward when it is tiny, when the leader isn't sure yet if it will work? What do people need at this stage?... In focusing on smaller experiments, we reduce the costs of failure and speed the feedback process so we can get smarter about what works and what doesn't. And we get students and families more involved in the process."

Madison founded Incubator in part to provide the institutional framework for educators and entrepreneurs to "de-risk" and scale down their experiments. However, lower risk and smaller scale don't themselves facilitate the kind of learning and innovation Madison hopes to reap from small bets. While conducting design thinking boot camps for budding entrepreneurs and innovators, Incubator has to work to inculcate new scalar mindsets through games and challenges. Participants are asked to brainstorm and share their ideas for improving education. Sometimes participants relate these in the form of questions like, "what if parents had packets paired with their children's books that guided them on how to effectively read with their children?" or "what if teachers had an app that allowed them to track student performance and communicate with parents all in one place?" Typically, Madison or another facilitator would then ask what the participant needed to test out this idea and get feedback. Participants would

offer an estimate of materials, support, or dollars, and invariably they would be asked "Can you do it with less? Can you do it smaller?" They would then be challenged to test out their idea on a shoestring budget of say, $50 or $100. These challenges were meant to get participants to think like designers as much as they were geared towards generating meaningful feedback on the specific project. Small bets are certainly a means for lowering risk in any given experiment, but they are also means of creating a "rapid feedback cycle" whereby the lessons of small failures are able to be integrated ever more quickly into an iterative feedback loop. Indeed, most ventures coming out of these training modules fail. That's the point though. Incubator is focused on creating innovators and entrepreneurs, not innovations and ventures, or as one of the facilitator's told me, "It's not about having the answer, it's about having a process that will get you closer to the answer."

The word experiment is quite fraught in Post Katrina New Orleans. Proponents of education reform hail the expansion of charter schools and private management as a promising model for the country. Others have critiqued the experimental character of reform as a violent act perpetrated upon the primarily black constituents of New Orleans Public Schools, evoking the ways in which black and other marginalized people have been available and exposed to experimentation in ante- and post-bellum, as well as colonial and postcolonial contexts. Beyond schools the city has been regarded as a kind of experimental ground for all kinds of sociopolitical projects, from the razing and reconstruction of public housing (Arena 2011) to the proliferation of forms of neoliberal privatization, extraction, and exploitation (Klein 2007), to the reconstitution of the subjects and institutions of charity and recovery (Adams 2013). Many of these accounts emphasize the exceptional and crisis infused vulnerability of the city and its population after Katrina as the catalyst for this condition of experimentation. However, it is

imperative to take neither crisis nor experiment for granted. Rather than an objective condition, crisis is a framing device in which historically situated narratives and projects are deployed (Roitman 2014). As Madison and their compatriots at Incubator try to work their way out of crisis and find a different kind of temporal engagement with reform and New Orleans we should also open up the idea of experiment to the kind of critical scrutiny borne by crisis.

In popular usage, there is an assumed correspondence between experiment and knowledge production. As a lower elementary school science teacher at a charter school in Harlem in 2008-10, I spent two years teaching 5-7 year olds "how to be scientists" by conducting experiments in which they would follow the "scientific method" – asking a question, forming a hypothesis, formulating a test, conducting said experiment, recording data, analyzing results. Even small children know that one conducts experiments to discover knowledge. But this has not always been the case. Shapin and Schaffer (1985) ask in their historical study of the development of experiment, "Why does one do experiments to arrive at scientific truth?" Through their account of the conflict between Hobbes and Boyle over the development of experiment, they show how experimental procedures came to be regarded as the premier means of establishing scientific truth through historically contingent circumstances, writing, "We will show that the experimental production of matters of fact involved an immense amount of labor, that it rested upon the acceptance of certain social and discursive conventions, and that it depended upon the production and protection of a special form of social organization." Experiments are historically contingent procedures for knowledge production that are shaped by prevailing cultural and political norms and forms of organization. If we take to heart this expansive notion of experiment, what can we learn from Incubator's attempts to foster a new kind of experimental

culture in education reform and Madison's critiques that dominant models of charter schools were not sufficiently innovative or experimental?

Madison and Incubator's call for a renewed commitment to a scale shifted culture of experimentation reflects and contributes to a change in the problem-space of New Orleans education reform. While the design thinking wing of New Orleans education reform may seem to have ultimately minor disagreements with the managerial and governance wing, I argue that their efforts are a critical reframing of the problem space of reform. By admitting to the shortcomings and racial cleavages of the top-down governance changes to schools and positing a theory of entrepreneurial and ethnographic innovation, they shift the terrain from one of entrenched political interests towards one of information flow. The recognition of "community perspectives" and "user needs" become indistinguishable inputs in a design process. This incorporation of racialized conflict and constituencies into an information economy has the potential to selectively include in ways that cut across hardened battle lines. There is some promise in this commitment to collaboration and self-critique. However, there are also concerns set into motion by Incubator's call for a new experimental culture.

As much as the ethnographic engagement and valorization of students and parents as anthropological fonts of knowledge and data may create opportunities for genuine collaboration, these interfaces also contain the seeds for racialized assemblages of conscription. On the one hand Riley, Madison, and other design thinking acolytes sincerely and wholeheartedly recognize the deep structural and personal violence facing the students they are attempting to serve. They promote an experimental philosophy distinctive primarily because it views these students and communities as active knowledge producers and co-designers, but they recognize the way black and poor students and communities have been disregarded throughout history and in recent

reforms. This is poignantly elaborated in Riley's reminder that all too often their students are viewed as problems rather than generators of solutions.

Nevertheless, the epistemological regime that design thinkers seek to cultivate can engender new kinds of exploitation in the form of conscription as well as remain blind to prevailing inequalities. While design thinkers can make protocols for observing and collaborating with users, these processes don't erase the relative asymmetries in power and stakes between participants in the design process. What reads as an invitation to egalitarian collaboration on the behalf of newly enlightened educators and entrepreneurs can act as a kind of coercive conscription into a kind of focus group or intelligence gathering operation, especially when care isn't taken to create equitable structures of dialogue between lead designers and users. In the age of social media and pervasive marketing, subjects are compelled to offer up all kinds of intelligence on their activities, desires, and predispositions, knowingly and unwittingly. Often these appeals and algorithms are framed within the terms of concern for or valuing customer/user/voter/consumer/public opinion while also demanding a kind of reporting labor from these subjects. In ascribing new kinds of value to the knowledge produced by students, parents, and communities under the experimental culture of design thinking, Incubator also generates a compulsion or coercion to produce that knowledge. Like the value generated by labor's efforts comes to dominate the worker under the thumb of capital, it is possible that the more the knowledge produced by users becomes valuable to the design of innovative school models and products, the more burden will be placed on users, mostly black and low income users, to generate that value, even if with respect and gratitude.

Madison looks to lower the stakes for designers to allow them to make small bets and learn from mistakes in rapid feedback cycles. Yet, the stakes for users are never quite lowered in

the same way. Yes, participating in a focus group to test a new idea for a school model or an education product may seem low stakes for a student or parent, but only in the immediate sense. They still carry the prevailing risks of membership in marginalized groups and as constituents of inadequate public education. When students and parents sign up to be in a 15-person pilot for a micro-school model for a whole school year, like at Foundations, they are assuming a level of risk unbalanced against the lower risk taken on by Riley and Incubator. Staying in their current schools are certainly risks as well, illustrating the baseline risk that the design thinking protocol doesn't necessarily account for. Not to be to blunt with the metaphor, but the designers come to the market with various forms of capital and the user with only their labor to sell. On its face and an even exchange, but one fraught with deep structural inequalities.

In creating an experimental framework for valuing the knowledge production of racialized subjects, Incubator may also create the material foundation for a racialized assemblage in which these same subjects are conscripted into providing exploited labor in the name of dialogue, empathy, and innovation.

Pitching as Praxis

The culmination of Incubator's long term training module for entrepreneurs is a pitch night, in which the budding entrepreneurs present 2-5 minute statements to sell a crowd of potential investors and community members on their ideas, often competing for small amounts of funding. The cohort I observed and interviewed in 2014 practiced these pitches once a week with each other before presenting to crowds in both New Orleans and New York. While the philosophy of design thinking and experimental culture of Incubator provide an epistemological foundation for shifting the problem-space of reform, it is in pitch nights where this work is brought before the public and gains momentum, catapulting reform into a hyped up future. These

ritualistic performances are the sites where design thinkers realize themselves as a community and do the work of shifting from a temporality of recovery to one of future oriented innovations.

"Does anybody want another beer?" - Devon asks the couple dozen of us in the midst of another practice session. We're halfway through the pitches and the groups so far have gotten supportive but tough feedback. The organizers have worked hard to craft the space as one in which both the audience and the cohort feel connected and comfortable enough to push the budding entrepreneurs. Incubator iconography can be found all over, emblazoned on various pieces of swag. The headbands are the most striking, the bright orange incongruous against the muted plaids and colors of most participants clothing. The Bud Light and practiced friendliness evoke college and collegiality.

The lightness of the moment is pierced by the morbid image of a body bag. The specter haunting so many narratives of school reform is present on screen. One of Riley's students, so promising, whose life mattered, murdered by another student. Riley doesn't know why, they're haunted by it. "These students are too often thought of as problems. How can we treat them as solutions?"[3]

Riley continues the pitch, wondering how things might have been different if their students had a school like Foundations, selling us on the specific school model,

> Foundations is a school that is a modern academy that unlocks career pathways for students through community engagement. We do this through a three branch solution, unlocking career pathways for students through community engagement: 21st century skills, community engagement, industry experience and exposure. How we manifest this - We teach students to identify community leads. For example, how might we use tech to meet a community need, how might we use technology to ensure parade cleanup is equal throughout the neighborhood and city? How might we beautify vacant lots in New

[3] (field notes)

> Orleans? We match the project, we match the need, with a career ready skill and then we design solutions. For example, for how we might use technology to meet a need in our community. Why not teach coding to students, they not only gain the exposure of the industry of software design, but they are able to apply to design a website for mom and pop businesses to improve cash flow… How might we improve cleanup… never mind lets skip that… (MC: ten seconds) We've seen students can learn through role play, we know students can learn deign thinking as early as the 7th and 8th grade, we know students can learn the industry. Where we're going… (Time's up. Clapped off)

Riley's counterparts and others asked questions and sent in anonymous feedback through their smartphones and computers to a link posted on the wall. Riley's colleagues felt a disjuncture between the pathos of the opening and the solution offered, saying, "I literally started trembling when you told those stories, but they were so long I forgot this was a pitch, get to the point," and "Your opening was powerful, your solutions should be too." At this practice session, the asymmetries between the structural and personal violence faced by Riley's students and the design oriented solutions proposed are striking to other Incubator participants. One the one hand, Riley is being called upon to sharpen their program and presentation, on the other, this disjointedness reveals the irresolvable tensions between the small scale solutions proposed by design thinking and the large scale structural violence faced by their "users".

Riley is nervous before the final pitch night in New Orleans. Always complementing me on my own sense of style, Riley asks if I think their collared shirt needs to be ironed before speaking to the crowd. I would normally say you should always iron your shirts, but there is no time and too many nerves. We walk back to the wind tunnel with Pat and Riley gets ready to practice the pitch a few more times. Madison walks by and tries to distract Riley by moving in and out of their field of vision and dropping objects on the floor. Riley loses concentration and Madison seriously but warmly chides them. You've got to be ready for distractions! Downstairs,

the floor looks like a glorified science fair. Each of the fellows stands by a board with a description of their project, ready to pitch on a one to one scale. Charlie introduces me to their family. The New Orleans Times Picayune is here, taking pictures. The crowd is composed of educators and funders, not many who appear to be students or parents.

Each pitcher walked to the front of the auditorium to deliver their idea for transforming schools. Most focused on concrete technical fixes like reading programs, software for teachers, or coding curriculum for students, though others had more ambitious total school designs. The purpose of these evening's pitches in New Orleans were to introduce these entrepreneurs to a community more than anything else. I recognized many of the faces in the room from other venues, educators and administrators from charter school networks, researchers from local think tanks and non-profits, local media.

Riley was the first to pitch, and their script had evolved from the practice session,

> Good evening everyone, my name is Riley and I'm the founder of Foundations Academy. They say that parents aren't supposed to outlive their children, teachers aren't supposed to outlive their children. In March 2012, one of my students, Morris, was murdered. Morris, who in 5th grade performed as a first grader, made I'M GOING TO COLLEGE his daily mantra. At his funeral they read the results of his Explore test. He would have received TOPS.[4] Had he lived, he could have gone to college…What killed Morris? The pull of the streets? If school pulled harder, he might be here today. In that moment, for me and my class, I knew I needed to rethink the purpose of school. As a result, it became my mission to help students discover their why. It became my mission to found Foundations.
>
> Foundations Academy is a modern 7-12 academy opening in fall of 2016 that unlocks career pathways for students through community engagement. Here's Griffin, Griffin represents the ideal Foundations graduate. Griffin is currently studying business and

[4] "TOPS (Taylor Opportunity Program for Students) is a program of state scholarships for Louisiana residents who attend either one of the Louisiana Public Colleges and Universities, schools that are a part of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, Louisiana approved Proprietary and Cosmetology Schools or institutions that are a part of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities."

> computer science at Chapman university as a sophomore. He chose those because of experiences at Foundations that helped him discover his why. Through the following branches – Purpose: Griffin discovered that part of his why was helping others through technology, through an experience of building a website for a local mom and pop business… Pathways: Griffin was able to pursue his interest in technology and business through authentic industry experiences in those fields. He developed marketable skills to those employers and the college that he ultimately applied to… Practice: Griffin was prepared for college and life because he was trained to be a self-directed learner.
>
> So, how do three of these branches look like without Griffin, using a prototype we ran with students this summer? We use a flex model of blended learning through personalized learning time where students learn at their own pace, we combine that with teaching executive function and role play in a rapid feedback instructional model and the result was that students become better self-directed learners under our models. We learned from Summit Public Schools in California. We put students on digital portals like Lynda.com, Treehouse, Skillshare, and General Assembly to learn skills of interest like them. We plan to have students participate in community internships with community partners. The result is that they have marketable skills in college or the workplace if they choose that. One student, Jackie, identified a community problem, (how can we use technology to develop more business for local mom and pops?). We matched Jackie with linda.com. Four hours later, he was able to devise an entire social media campaign to help generate more traffic to this mom and pop restaurant and also more cash flow.
>
> So the question I have for you is, are you Foundational? If you're a parent, we need you on our email list, if you're media we need you telling our story, if you have access to funds we need your support to build these structures. Everyone here can be a part of building a more grounded community and helping kids discover their why. Please join us, thank you.

Sadly, my favorite part of the pitch has been cut out. The talk of students being their own solutions has been left on the cutting room floor for tonight. The new iteration is more programmatic, the details of the student's lives stripped out, the why is more structure, less feeling.

I asked Riley why they had dropped this critical reframing of students as generators of solutions. Riley told me,

> I was hacking this with Dee for a long time the other night, cuz she wanted to hear more of my life story and what brought me to this point, and it got to a point where there were so many angles to make this pitch from. At some point it may be useful to go back to the problem thing. The angle that seemed to make the most sense was like, uh, this why piece. Like, what was pivotal about the story for me, the most pivotal thing is that *literally* changed how I taught, like how I led a classroom of kids and the way that it changed me was I discovered that I needed to, like, provide them a compelling why, which is like Tupac stuff. In my 15 minute (pitch) I go into detail on my success rallying them. I don't go into it in this one. At the end of the day it became clear that my model, the tag line is all centered around giving kids a compelling why and leveraging that or building that through these different pillars, if you will. So I chose to focus more so on the why in this pitch. Depending on the response I may decide to go back to like, I don't know, you may have heard me mention in the pitch, but I was using a student to solve a real community problem. I don't know how that came across.

I continued to impress upon Riley that the line about students being viewed as solutions rather than problems was important, that it said something critical about the way society views black youth. The pitch format demands that Riley balance an account of the problems facing their users and the solutions they propose to develop. There is an inherent tension in this structure and the solution can't seem too far out of scale with the problem. Yes, Riley never lost focus on the acute violence facing their students, but they also recalibrated the scaling between their problem and solution by orienting their hook around providing students with motivations. Quite simply, it's a more conservative framing of the violence facing Riley's students as less structural and more personal. The potentially more radical narrative of the practice pitch became more like a narrative of capacity building that those in the international development world would be quite familiar with.

The New Orleans pitch night was a more relaxed affair than what occurred in New York City several weeks later. Madison took more time in the beginning of the event to break down the story of Incubator and the evenings agenda. The highlight of this "pitch" is a more polished presentation of Madison's chart of educational stakeholders. The messiness is supposed to be a monument to bureaucratic mess that schooling has become. Madison promises to focus on the

bottom level, the grassroots, parents, students, and community. This night, while pitching in front of a stunning view of One World Trade Center, real money was on the line. The smaller interventions were more popular with the crowd this time, and I could tell that it was vastly more difficult to pitch a school than a program. Before and after the New York pitch I spoke with Riley about their plans for continuing their school development while remaining a teacher. Riley had spent the past few years teaching in a No Excuses charter school and the disconnection between their school and the experimental culture of Incubator was wearying, saying "I don't know how I can go back". Riley found the culture of the school too suffocating and their example shows us how the transience of some educators in New Orleans charters may be due to the stifling environment of their employers and not their lack of commitment to the city. Riley seems to be trying to design a school not only to create a future for students, but to escape their own intolerable present.

How can we understand the work that is done by these communal pitching rituals? I would argue that these pitch nights work to break free from the temporal impasse of the problem-space of reform by so relentlessly focusing on promise and futurity. Arjun Appadurai claims that anthropologists have been overly attentive to reproduction at the expense of thinking about how futures are produced. His analysis of how to grasp the "future as cultural fact" can help us make sense of the productivity of the future making rituals under discussion in this manuscript (2013). Appadurai encourages us to analyze the production of futures through three lenses, imagination, aspiration, and speculation. The rituals and visions of Incubator have been derided by some of my informants working in schools and administration as ineffectual, that the ideas and ostensible innovations "don't do much for kids". But when we think about the kinds of imagination, aspiration, and speculation involved in the training and execution of the entrepreneur's pitches

and programs we can see that there is a socially productive future making that may be underrated. According to Appadurai, acts of imagination produce localities, thus reformers imaginations make a competing vision for New Orleans in which they can belong in ways prohibited in the present. Aspirations provide "navigational paths", charting a course for communities in both conjured images and in the case of the specific venture to be discussed, as role models. Finally, speculation is the lens through which we can attend to how our interlocutors conceive of and manage risk and uncertainty. Pitches inherently involve forms of speculation and assertions of credit-worthiness and the employees of the venture under discussion have to be managed as racialized risks as well as opportunities.

Yang has examined the ways that public rituals of community participation are not merely spaces in which education reformers dictate to communities, but are contested space in which reform agents can be recruited to varying agendas (Yang 2010). During practice sessions, pitchers received withering but supportive feedback from their colleagues, breaking down and reforming their ideas over time. In the public presentations, a judges panel and crowd questions often push back on the narratives offered by the entrepreneurs in training. Like Yang's examples, these pitches serve as a kind of rite of passage, both in terms of technical capacities, but also in inducting pitchers into new communities, though ones limited by the narrow segment of New Orleans that attends these events. Nevertheless, pitch nights are spaces where new collectivities are imagined and sustained through "participatory technologies" (McQuarrie 2013).

Pitch nights also function as spaces of speculation. Sunder Rajan's examination of the promissory visions and forward looking statements of genomics companies provide an apt comparison (2006). Looking at similar Silicon Valley business cultures that Incubator draws on, Sunder Rajan tells us that the promissory statements of these companies should not be analyzed

under the rubric of truth, but of credibility. Likewise, pitch nights function to reassure potential investors and community members not with ironclad guarantees that a particular school model or intervention will work or is "truly" innovative, but with the conferring of credibility through the mastery of specific kinds of performative codes. Pitchers are judged on their ability to provide a compelling rhetorical balance between problem and solution, to demonstrate a concrete product with a clear plan for growth and evidence of traction. All of these judgments are based on performance as much as evidentiary foundations. This focus on credibility rather than competence is vulnerable to the prejudices and stratifications of the community at hand. One entrepreneur I interviewed was not a fan of pitching, claiming that pitches called on a masculinist style that focuses more on big promises than plausible pathways. While this may indicate a troubling tendency to favor bluster over competence, we should consider that, like in the case of genomics companies, the vision and hype on display are productive in and of themselves. Innovation, design, and the future all work together to sustain and make room for people like Madison and Riley, who are caught in an ambivalent zone of commitment to reform but dissatisfaction with a status quo now partially of their own making.

Conclusions

Youthfulness has been a productive ideological object for charter based reform, but one whose limits have come to the fore as the reform era shifts into a longer term engagement with New Orleans. As its founders and participants approach the end of a kind of professional youthfulness, Incubator provides examples of transients become transplants coping with this spatio-temporal shift. Incubator's experimental cultures and pitching rituals create a space and energy to sustain a particular segment of the reform community as it attempts to lay claim to a future New Orleans. The organization is still a relatively small player on the reform scene, but it

may point to a future in which charter-oriented reforms can no longer be criticized for their outsiderness and inauthenticity, not because reformers have passed an objective standard of belonging to the city, but because they've helped to redefine the very tests we might use to scrutinize them.

Madison, Riley, and others at Incubator recognize structural violence in ways that No Excuses reformers do not. They conceive of schools and schooling as intimately bound up with the life and challenges of a broader community. For them, schools are not sanctuaries apart from communities and means to escape violence, they should be the means by which students equip themselves to transform their community life. Their use of design thinking entails a sincere privileging of the knowledge production of students and communities as users of educational services, breaking with a style of top down managerial reform that had dominated New Orleans schools in the years after Hurricane Katrina. They consider their collaborative and participatory design process to not only be more innovative, but also more just in the context of segregated schooling and the racialized transformation of the educator class after Act 35.

The experimental culture and communal rituals developed by Incubator do their part to reconstruct race by providing novel assemblages for the practice of racecraft. The epistemic culture fostered by Incubator has introduced a new set of social relations whereby knowledge, infrastructures, and rituals make and maintain processes of racialization. The notes entrepreneurs take on histories of public education for black people, the feedback users give on a pilot program, the pitch designers give about the problems facing New Orleans students, these are all grounds for the everyday production of new economy of racializing knowledge in the form of innovation driving data. As Madison suggests, this call to collaboration is meant to move the city's education system beyond the temporal impasse of recovery, propelling designers and users

together into a promising future. However, what remains to be seen is whether or not this participatory assemblage conscripts users into a burdensome apparatus of laborious reportage. In the early days of No Child Left Behind and the proliferation of test based accountability, data on student performance was posed as a liberating force, allowing for targeted interventions in schools in underserved communities. Over a decade later, research has shown how this data has become fetishized to the point of becoming an end in and of itself. I imagine that it is just as possible that the knowledge producing apparatus of design thinking could become a fetish as well, one that demands students, parents, and communities, as users take on new burdens of providing intelligence on their needs and desires. I hope we don't face a future in which low income black constituents of public schools are conscripted into providing the raw data for an empathetic knowledge producing apparatus that is nonetheless unable to resolve the fundamental forms of structural violence facing their communities.

CHAPTER 5

SUBSTITUTING RACE

Incubator, the organization that embraces design thinking in order to foster innovation in education reform and develop education entrepreneurs has helped launch a number of ventures in New Orleans since its founding in 2011. In this chapter, I highlight one of the more successful businesses to emerge from this entrepreneurial experiment, a company I call ConnectED. This company takes the user-centeredness and community mindedness of Incubator and uses those principals to find a niche in the substitute teaching business. ConnectED is one of the first businesses to grow out of Incubator and I first encountered them while attending a meeting of community activists at the Sojourner Truth Community Center in the Treme in 2013. It's no accident that the first place I met Sidney, the Chief Operations Officer, was while they were talking to progressive teachers and education activists. ConnectED draws on a different talent pool than the charter management organizations discussed in chapters 1 and 2, one shaped both by a different philosophy of human capital that embraces locality and creativity and the increased availability of locally born educators and artists as a kind of reserve army for teachers in charter schools. Sidney was at the community meeting not only to listen to community perspectives and gather intelligence, but to recruit potential substitute teachers to contract with their company. My interest piqued after Sidney introduced themselves to the group, I talked to them and secured an invite to their next training session at a charter school in Gentilly.

As I arrive at the ConnectED training session for potential new substitute teachers, I reintroduce myself to Robin, the founder and CEO. We had met a few years ago at another New Orleans education organization, before Robin got the idea to start ConnectED. I'm reminded how small this reform world can feel. Robin and Sidney introduce me to the potential recruits

attending this professional development session, including an architect and an unemployed veteran teacher, as well as Jay, a teacher at a No Excuses charter school who would conduct the training session. Jay didn't work for ConnectED, but had themselves worked with Incubator to develop an independent consulting business to help train teachers in the disciplinary and instructional practices favored by New Orleans charter schools. Jay's model focused on quick repetition of specific scenarios, exercises which would make the execution of classroom authority seem like second nature. As we began the training session, Jay modeled the comportment and tone we were supposed to mimic by instructing us to put away our electronics. "Close your laptops…" Jay commands. "A little too aggressive. Let me try again… On the count of three, please close your laptops and fold your hands on your desk. One, two, three. Good job!" Flatter affect this time, a bit more positive at the end. "That's how I need you to give directions to students, narrate the steps, and give them no option but to follow your lead. I know it may not come natural to you, but when you practice your lines, your tone, your gaze, your posture, you'll get it." It's a little too easy of a connection, but Foucault's disciplined bodies come to mind as I think about what is natural to each of us in the room.

As I stand in the circle and watch Jay give these instructions, dormant muscles from my days as a kindergarten teacher with Teach for America start to twitch. I start to remember what it was like to attempt to take command of 25 six year old children, to demand "100% compliance". It didn't come natural to me and I struggled my first year teaching to satisfy the classroom management requirements of my school. I and a handful of potential substitute teachers awkwardly attempt to mimic Jay's tone and affect as we practice our moves. Not everyone here has taught before, or taught in this No Excuses discipline style. Some are more successful than others. Some resist more than others. I felt a perverse sense of pride as I quickly

shook off the rust from four years away from my charter school classroom and confidently asserted my authority and gave clear directions in our games and exercises. In retrospect, I can't help by feel that my own discipline in this moment communicated something to Robin, Sidney, and Jay, that my facility with classroom management techniques and their praise for my performance "built rapport" in a way that my descriptions of my dissertation project could not. At the end of the session, Jay privately tells me they aren't sure they're able to help this group of potential educators unfamiliar with charter school discipline, they aren't sure if it is worth their time. They might need more than Jay can do to fit in and succeed as substitutes in New Orleans charter schools.

No longer unionized at the vast majority of New Orleans charter schools[1], teachers in New Orleans charter schools work as at-will employees under newly flexible and relatively autonomous administrative regimes. If teachers sign an employment agreement or contract of any kind, it usually is a one or two-page document stating little more than this fact.[2] In a typical teacher's union contract there are well defined rules for how much time teachers can take off for personal or sick dates, how much overtime they are paid to cover colleague's classes, and how substitute teachers are to be hired. Without these bargained rules and procedures, charter schools often do not employ substitute teachers, asking staff to cover for each other's absences (often without additional compensation) as they focus intensely on creating a tightly integrated school culture and are wary of exposing students to adults unfamiliar with school norms and rituals. It is not insignificant that by not being required to pay overtime for coverages, schools save money by having teachers cover each other instead of hiring substitutes. However, unlike every other

[1] A handful of charter schools have unionized since the fieldwork for this project was conducted, though none at No Excuses style schools which are my focus, and none at schools where ConnectED sends teachers.
[2] The CEO of the charter school network I taught for in Harlem from 2008-10 would contrast the thinness of this document to the "1000 page" UFT union contract as a symbol of unburdened freedom for us as employees. According to them, the thin contract would not "get between us" as employer and employee.

American city where charter schools compose a minority in a given district, there is tighter competition for talent between charter schools in New Orleans. When charters are nearly the only game in town, administrators have to consider quality of life issues for teachers in ways that New York of California charter schools do not, lest they become an unattractive destination for talent. In this labor market context, Robin saw an opportunity.

Working with Incubator over the course of their long-term design thinking module, Robin reflected on charter school's problems with substitute teachers and developed a pitch to create a "flexible" staffing model for substitutes more suitable for the No Excuses model of school culture and discipline while also enriching the cultural capacities of these schools. Mentored by Madison at Incubator, Robin used "lean startup" methodologies to refine, pitch, and create a business, ConnectED, whereby they created and managed a digital platform for providing substitutes who are vetted by their trusted judgment; they are trained to be familiar with the work styles and cultures of charters, able to step in without worry of an improper fit. Robin developed many pitches over the course of their training, practicing as often as several times a week. In one of the earlier "quick" pitches Robin states, "With ConnectED we are taking on the broken substitute staffing system. Kids have a substitute teacher for an average of six months of their entire school career and that's time that we currently throw away due to a lack of quality and efficient flexible staffing options for schools. We're passionate about enrichment and the need for more community engagement in the school day." In another pitch Robin frames the issue with a more forward and quantitatively defined enthusiasm, "My name is Robin, my company is ConnectED. We are disrupting the $4 billion substitute staffing market, flipping a substitute into something that is awesome, that we can be psyched about. We're matching high quality subs to schools via a platform efficiently and effectively." In each of these pitches, Robin

defines substitute teaching as a "market" that at times an adversary, an opportunity, large, broken, in need of "disruption". These pitches associate quality with flexibility, showing how design thinkers and No Excuses reformers can still share key tenets of neoliberal theories of human capital.

Every pitch is a delicate balance of defining a pressing problem, a sizeable market, and a compelling solution. In different versions of pitches for the same company, you might see each one of these components framed differently, sometimes drastically. While, the previous quick pitches framed the staffing platform as the innovation, at other times it is the talent itself that is pitched as ConnectED's real contribution. An online article on ConnectED states,

> Take 30 seconds and stare at the photo above of a (No Excuses) classroom in New Orleans. Question: What's the most innovative thing you see? Answer: It's the person sitting at the front of the class. You see, she's not the regular teacher. She's what (Robin), the founder of (ConnectED), calls a guest educator. You might call her a sub, but don't let (Robin) catch you saying that. When (ConnectED) guest educators show up in schools that subscribe to (the) service, kids don't watch movies or do busywork, they keep learning. This might not look so radical, but I think it is downright groundbreaking. The teacher who usually spends her days in that classroom is at home resting. Or maybe she's giving one of her peer's real-time feedback in their classroom. Or maybe she's across town watching a teacher try something new with tablets. Whatever she's doing, her school is able to treat her more like a professional because of (ConnectED).

ConnectED doesn't just provide a "flexible" mechanism for providing substitute teachers to charter schools, it also promises that they will be new kinds of laboring subjects, "guest educators". At times the idea of the guest educator can seem like a bonus on top of ConnectED's core business. The primary issue for principals and deans is to make sure that they can quickly and easily find a substitute teacher that will be able to control the classroom and provide an adequate amount of instruction. However, as ConnectED continued to grow, the idea of the guest

educator became a greater part of their continuously developing pitch to funders and school leaders.

It would be easy to see the blog writeup above merely as a friendly piece of promotion for ConnectED, but I also consider it to be part of a broader pitching process, one that extends beyond pitch practices and promotions. In the comments section of the blog, Robin continues to pitch their company as they respond to questions from readers,

> "(Lee – University Professor): Question - how is (Robin) addressing the issue of certification? One of the biggest problem with subs is the relatively limited pool for recruitment. But if you had artists, musicians, skilled workers, professionals on call, then a teacher's absence could open a great opportunity - and one that could be replicated as a given "guest educator" worked with different classes throughout a school year.
>
> (Robin - Founder and CEO at ConnectED): Great question (Lee), thanks for sharing. Love your thoughts and completely agree with the opportunity to flip the "off hour" into an "(connectED hour" by bringing in diverse community talent. It's been special to see slam poetry champions and public health workers come in and inspire kids at our partner sites during the sub day -- and we're working on doing more of this. In terms of certification, we take quality seriously and are always working to improve our screening processes and partner with groups that provide professional development and certification options. We're also building our own stamp of approval based on partner feedback, educator performance and student outcomes. For partners that require specific certifications, we have a wide range of folks in our network -- including retired teachers, teaching artists, former administrators -- with a broad range of licenses and experiences. The requirements vary across school models and states, but in general the standard is quite low -- so we're looking to 1) elevate the expectation 2) use what we're learning to shift how we think about staffing and the role of a teacher-as-specialist more broadly.

This exchange highlights the guest educators themselves as a kind of labor innovation as well as the conditions of possibility for their inclusion in ConnectED's project. Following Salzinger's (2003) assertion that workers as subjects are "created, not found", we should consider one of ConnectED's primary innovations to be the cultivation of the guest educator as a flexible, creative, and diverse subject. It would be a mistake to think that these subjects are merely "out

there" just waiting for the right "flexible staffing platform" to plug them into substitute teaching opportunities at charter schools. To do so would buy into the notion either "low standards" or a naturalized deep pool of local and creative talent create the labor availability and subjects that ConnectED needs. Rather, ConnectED works to create guest educators from a reserve army of unemployed and underemployed educators, artists, and "creatives" created by policy and politics both specific to New Orleans and operating and national and global scales.

Despite the generally liberal and multiculturalist politics of most New Orleans charter school operators, the value of the guest educator as a diverse and creative subject is not self-evident to school leaders. Sidney spent more of the working time as the chief operations officer directly in contact with principals and deans to both understand their needs and cultivates a sense of the value of guest educators. In interviews, Sidney was more assertive that ConnectED educators reflect local identities and talents which have been marginalized and effaced under charter management organizations' definitions of talent and human capital, telling me that, "The culture piece is what excites me more, my background is not in pedagogy…Part of the problem is that veteran educators are not valued by current school runners" and that "I came in to town, young and white, with no clue about New Orleans, but I was being treated as high quality talent that the city needed… I hope we can contribute to changing mindsets". ConnectED focuses on hiring local artists, entrepreneurs, and former teachers. The goal is to provide flexible and desirable work for both the substitutes and school leaders while also infiltrating and reshaping leadership's sensibilities of the cultural underpinnings of talent and human capital. According to Sidney, school leaders don't necessarily "see" the value veteran and local educators can provide and ConnectED creates an opportunity and an encounter whereby this value becomes legible and manifested.

Robin and Sidney have worked hard to try to build a brand for ConnectED whereby school leaders can trust that a ConnectED "guest educator" will not just fill a teacher's seat for the day, but will fit in and contribute positively to the classroom and school community. Robin and Sidney use workshops like the teacher gym from the opening vignette as well as hiring former charter school teachers to make sure that they send in people who are familiar with the "school culture" of the larger charter networks that make up the bulk of their clients. While ConnectED frames this familiarity and resulting trust in terms of student engagement, the practical means by which their guest educators seamlessly fit in is by knowing and adapting to the classroom management systems of the school, both positive and punitive. School leaders I've spoken to are first and foremost concerned about whether or not a ConnectED educator can "hold down the room". Robin and Sidney typically send a strong fit to a school when building a relationship, such as someone who used to work in a KIPP school but is now only looking for part time work while they attend grad school. Such moves help them demonstrate their ability to provide stability for school leaders facing anything from a typical sick day to more specialized needs such as department retreats or teachers resigning mid-year. While a great deal of interest from school leaders comes from this baseline ability to assist in the normal functioning of the school day, Robin and Sidney see this satisfaction as a Trojan Horse for cultivating the other values of the guest educator.

According to Sidney, school leaders have a certain vision of what they want in a teacher, but at times that vision is too restrictive and excludes a broader range of educators and educational experiences from entering charter schools in the city. Sidney focuses on using the ConnectED talent pool to push on school leader's visions of talent and human capital through "transformative" classroom experiences. Unlike the staff demographics of most charter schools

they contract with, the majority of ConnectED educators are black and native to New Orleans. Many of them are also artists, singers, poets, authors, architects, etc. These guest educators are ostensibly providing value by serving as more engaging than usual substitutes as well as opportunities for live interactions with models of aspirational futures. Sidney framed this to me, stating "Our theory of change, it's a complicated value proposition. We believe that students having teachers like them is important… We want school to be a place where students want to be… Having teachers of color that share their background is vital. They have to know that they have options. That they are not just doing it for themselves, but for the community." The time that students spend with a ConnectED guest educator is supposed to be culturally enriching and affirming, rather than merely adequate to the standards of their regular teachers.

I observed a handful of ConnectED guest educators in classrooms at different charter schools over the course of the year.[3] While in school, these educators balance "holding down the room" with expressions of their artistic talents and local backgrounds. These expressions range from mini-lessons explicitly focused on these talents, such as one guest educator's explanation of book publishing to a class of fifth graders (which I will expand on later in the chapter), to statements on their affinity with students ("I grew up just around the corner") and their exemplar status as models of success. Language is one of the more powerful and immediate techniques of relation, as accents and dialect communicate affinity in ways explicit statements cannot. Sometimes discipline and affinity could happen in the same moment. I observed a musician guest educator who used their stage name, Tiger, freeze the entire room after a student reached out and touched their hair while passing between desks. Tiger gave the student what I called in

[3] Sidney asked several times if I was interested in working as a guest teacher as part of my research. I declined, both to keep a certain professional distance and to avoid being entangled again in a school discipline system that I found very stressful when I was a classroom teacher at a New York City charter school from 2008-10.

my notes the “teacher death stare” for five seconds before saying a word. In a calm and quiet tone, Tiger asked, “Am I your sister? Am I your friend? Am I your teacher? I am your teacher and you will not disrespect me like that. I would never touch your hair like that without permission.”

On its face, this interaction could take place with any kind of teacher talking to any kind of student, setting down boundaries and communicating authority. But Tiger is doing some subtle relationship building and defining with their steely gaze and assertive remarks. While any teacher might object to a student touching their hair, Tiger had marked their coiffure as off limits earlier in the class session, saying to the students at the beginning, “Let's get to work! I want focus today, so don't ask me about my gigs, don’t ask me about my band, and don’t ask me about my hair!” Tiger hadn’t been introduced yet as a musician, and I noted how this particular assertion of off limits questions seemed like a brilliant way of creating allure and student investment in Tiger’s aura, writing in my notebook, “is this just how she talks or is it a strategy? either way its brilliant, she's making herself seem cool and distant at the same time, she's negging the students into wanting to comply with her instruction.” Tiger’s hair certainly was alluring, a multi-colored crown of an afro unlike the do’s worn by any other teacher I had seen that year. By reaching out to touch Tiger’s hair, the student didn’t just cross a boundary of personal space, they opened a space in which Tiger was able to communicate both affinity and authority, buttressed by the racialized politics of black women’s hair.

Black women, in the academy and popular venues, have noted the frequency with which their hair is politicized in the workplace and among friends and acquaintances, in particular the license with which strangers, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances will ask to touch, or touch unasked, their hair. Tiger’s hairstyle, an afro not considered professional in many workplaces

(though I would venture it merely unusual in charter schools rather than proscribed), communicated aspects of their identity without saying a word and that particular student seemed unable to resist that tactile compulsion. What I noted about the student however, is that they themselves had dreadlocks, another black hairstyle subject to both fascination and marginalization in professional environments. While the student crossed a line by trying to touch Tiger's hair, they were crossing a line of affinity as much as difference. This may be why Tiger asked, "Am I your friend?" and "Am I your sister?" These questions had to be rhetorically posed because students seemed to relate to Tiger as a kind of kin and Tiger had to communicate their role and authority as a teacher in light of these affinities. Tiger never had to say these things out loud to the students because these follicular familial politics were implicitly understood in this classroom.

While Tiger was very successful in grabbing student's attention and building relationships, they often needed help from Sidney and Robin to maintain their reputation with principals at the schools in which they worked. As a musician, Tiger kept an irregular schedule and was often late to teaching jobs, or not available at the hours schools needed. This is where ConnectED became a source of value for the guest educators themselves. Obviously, as substitutes are paid for their work. One of the teachers expressed to me that the remuneration and flexibility was favorable compared to their previous teaching work. But guest educator's engagement with the startup is also part of a brokering of cultural capital. Key to the functioning of this business is the trust that Robin and Sidney are able to build with school leaders to get teachers in the door who are not typically let in the school building. Sidney explained to me how they have to work with school leaders to make sure they recognize the value of someone like Tiger, saying,

> We had a situation last week, where one of our more artistic and musical people, I'll just say it, it was Tiger, and any school would be lucky to have them… We had a situation where the school just needs somebody to manage transitions tightly and be deferential to the staff… We have a high school we partner with, where the school leader is from Chicago and New England… Tiger's schedule makes it hard for them to be at a school on time, they live far away… It's hard for anyone… But that communicates to school leader a lack of commitment. It's hard to smooth over this time thing, when they're late multiple times and they aren't deferential… We do honor Tiger and respect them… but we need to work with them so that working within the rules and constraints is not demeaning… That's the professional requirement. We're managing expectations on both sides. We don't want Tiger to feel like we're trying to constrain them or boss them around, we know they're a gifted artist, and we know on the school side they need someone to run the ship… From the beginning of the year we've shifted from the question of "what do schools need?" to, these are our people and they're excellent, and how do we coach schools to see that?

These references to professionalism and deference evoke the ways that teachers in charter schools are expected to take on mindsets and affective stances as part of their laboring subjectivities. As discussed in chapter 2 and in the work of Kathi Weeks, professional workers are increasingly judged along these axes and not just on the quality of their products. Sidney does not disrupt this process when advocating on the behalf of Tiger or other teachers that don't fit the comportment expected by school leaders however. ConnectED merely argues implicitly that a wider range of expression should be considered expectable within these norms.

Sidney and Robin have both recognized in interviews that their own status as valued talent is both racialized and unfairly ascribed, and they hope to use this privilege to help render the capacities of their teachers acceptable and legible to charter schools. Sidney is in constant communication with school leaders and teachers and works to translate and smooth over misunderstandings, often articulated around the temporal expectations of the working day. Sidney described to me in an interview how they had to advocate for a teacher working as a regular substitute. The teacher had to leave at a certain time of day to pick up their kids and this

rigid quit time (compared to the mostly childless staff who stay later into the evening) was interpreted as a lack of commitment by the principal. Sidney tried to communicate to the principal the other ways this guest educator showed commitment to the school in ways that weren't obvious such as participation in community events on weekends and evenings. Sidney reflected on this interaction stating, “The way people demonstrate commitment is also cultural, commitment to one of my teachers is having kids over, volunteering, they’re a committed person who has other commitments as well.” (rough transcript) Sidney also works to get more permanent employment for subs when possible. Emory, after gaining full time employment at a school where they had substituted throughout the year, expressed deep appreciation to me for the ConnectED’s support and great pride in the recognition of a permanent position. The ConnectED business model is highly dependent on Robin and Sidney’s abilities to vouch for, translate for, and legitimate guest educators who are typically not let into charter schools. Robin and Sidney function to mitigate the risks schools take by working with “unproven” or non-credible talent, a key link in a speculative chain.

These three values (pedagogical stability, local black culture, and white professional social capital) coexist unevenly in the ConnectED business model. Robin and Sidney hope they combine in a way that uses the flexibility of the charter school environment to expand the horizons of learning for students, ties them closer to community in the classroom, and provides school leaders and local educators a means to recognize and connect with each other. As much as Sidney hopes to use the ConnectED platform to enrich student experiences and provide opportunities for marginalized educators, they admit that the “pedagogical thing” comes first for school leaders. Robin was even more forthright about these priorities, saying,

> It’s a hidden value (brokering cultural capital). If I’m being self-critical, we're not transparent about that, like not explicit about saying what I’m doing is translating and communicating between people in charter schools and people who want to be engaged with kids, but don't feel like they have or have access to positions, or jobs… It's a lot of reading someone right away, giving them a sense of who are they. Why do they want to do this? Why haven't they been able to do it so far? How I can position them in this existing system? That's our role, like a generative in-between space… But I don't tell people that’s what we're doing… Pushing mindsets is hard. Schools are our customers, so I can only push so much, they tell me what they need.

The flexibility which creates the space for ConnectED to exist also contains the seeds of less liberating possibilities. It’s possible that school leader’s desire for stability and discipline override the other values in the classroom; that teachers who hold down the room turn out to be more profitable than teachers who excite the students. Rather than infiltrate the schools with alternative models of teaching, guest educators may become increasingly focused on mimicking the pre-existing models. Recognition of talent may not lead towards equal appreciation of diverse forms of human capital, but a further stratification of it with local black educators more welcome in the school, but in more contingent and precarious forms of employment.

ConnectED draws on a talent pool of marginalized educators and tries to find ways for them to fit in to the charter school landscape. The problem may be that this very fitting in can be as much a process of further marginalization as it can be and opportunity for inclusion and new forms of community. Demand for ConnectED’s business grew robustly over the course of its first year, but it remains to be seen whether its social goals are proceeding as well. When I interviewed Robin near the end of my fieldwork, they were somewhat embarrassed by the ambition of their early pitches while also admiring the clarity of vision. Having just finished a year of operation, the day to day exigencies of running a business were taking up more of their mindshare than the promises of pitching. Robin reflected,

> Sometimes I look at people pitching, and I don't mean this in a condescending way… I have moments where I'm like… I don't know how we're going to make payroll, we don't have dollars, all of my credit cards are maxed out, all my things are overdrawn, I've already borrowed money from more people than I can borrow money from… like oh shit… that level of how do I get to the next week, get to the next day. Maybe it does temper the vision a little bit, or make me more cynical…

Robin was adamant that running ConnectED as a for-profit business was a better way to remain accountable to the schools and communities they were looking to serve as opposed to corporate and philanthropic donors. Nevertheless, school leaders hold an outsize influence in this model as the direct customer.

While ConnectED is notable for the way its sources of value entrepreneurialize indigeneity and racial identity, the business also gives us analytical purchase on transformations in some of the key terms of charter school based education reform. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss three such loci. First, I will examine how ConnectED works to transform the politics of racial authenticity in education reform into an opportunity to market racial sincerity. Second, I will put ConnectED teacher's "flexibility" in the context of the charter school labor market and show how the term gains new layers through their business model as well as how it is internalized and appropriated by participants. Finally, I will contrast Robin's vision of ConnectED as an accountable for-profit business with both the audit cultures of charter schools as well as the ways that some of the guest educators themselves use their liminal positions to challenge school disciplinary cultures.

Substituting Authenticity, Selling Sincerity

Given all the ways that New Orleans' No Excuses charter schools have been criticized for their whiteness and lack of connection to black communities, one of the fantastic allures of a ConnectED guest educator is that they can provide a kind of organic transfusion local cultural

content and blackness. Watching students listen to a slam poet with rapt attention, one could think they were in the presence of an avatar of unmediated authenticity. Of course, the way guest educators express their identities and talents are as performative as any other racialized cultural expression. Given all the work that Robin and Sidney do to place and advocate for their educators, it would be easy to think of the ways they have to try to "fit in" to the charter school environment as performative, opposed to their cultural and artistic expressions, which are "natural". I noted to Robin in an interview that I thought ConnectED teachers were called on to perform cultural authenticity as much as they were compelled to try to fit in to the work cultures of charter schools, and Robin admitted that this was something they worried about, reflecting, "I think sometimes, because I'm not from here, because I'm white, because I came through (a national education non-profit), I think that I encourage acting out that realness instead of saying, no just be real… That's a pretty smart observation, I don't know what to do about it."

I elaborated on my concerns, as by this point in the conversation, Robin had interpellated me as a kind of consultant or advisor, and I wanted to be clear about my thoughts on the racial politics of this business. I told Robin that I was thinking about the long history of black people putting on a mask and performing their culture for white audiences in both obvious and subtle ways, and that I wondered if there would be times when the perceived value of guest educator's cultural authenticity would incentivize or push them to put on a show instead or in addition to being themselves (not that I believed that there was an unmediated or authentic self to be performed, just more or less sensationalized versions). Robin quickly replied that, "it gives me major anxiety and makes me sick to my stomach to think I would contribute to that in any way." Listening to the tape of this portion of the conversation, I'm stunned at the way I back off at this point, perhaps looking to comfort Robin as I say that I wasn't making an assertion, but rather

presenting an open-ended concern informed by historical tendencies. I think that part of me was falling into the trap of centering Robin's comfort as a white subject, and all too frequent pitfall in discussions of race. As an ethnographer, I wanted to have a generous reading of my subjects, even when they were entangled in fraught systems and ventures. But I got caught up in the sincerity of Robin's reflections, unsure of how to balance their reflections with my worries about the politics of performance.

John Jackson challenges American tendencies to evaluate race along the lines of authenticity/inauthenticity by offering up a concept of "racial sincerity" for analyzing racialized encounters and social structures (2005). Jackson claims that when we scrutinize race in terms of authenticity, we objectify and fetishize it as well as subject others to strict and unfair litmus tests. By focusing on racial authenticity we ignore the work that goes into "crafting" race (Fields and Fields 2012) as a socio-historical object and as a constellation of performative encounters. Racial sincerity is a rather more nimble concept for analyzing the forces of racialization at play when reformers like Robin attempt to build connections to community. Jackson claims that sincerity/authenticity is a binary which resonates with but does not cleanly map onto other social scientific binaries such as subject/object, structure/agency, or form/content. Racial sincerity is a different way of "keeping it real" that is slippery, unverifiable, and intersubjective. Sincerity is Jackson's way of conceiving of race as a relational phenomenon. Racial sincerity can create forms of community and identity that are resistant to challenges on the basis of claims of authenticity. Attending to sincerity in the production of authenticity allows us to evaluate the recent diversity turn in education reform differently. Actions which may seem cynical and inauthentic on their face, which clumsy and narrow attempts often are, are not as flat footed under the rubric of sincerity. As I'll discuss further in my analysis of ConnectED, it is sincerity

which makes their work effective. Ambiguous and sincere performances of racial and cultural knowledge and practices are as socially effective as historically verifiable rootedness, in that sincere practices are unverifiable and indeterminate in ways that claims to historical authenticity are not. Keeping this in mind we can discuss ConnectED with an eye not toward whether or not their attempts at better connecting schools and community are authentic, but what tensions come to the surface when transplants like Robin attempt to create organizations more rooted. In order to do so, I want to discuss two guest educators, one whose performance I read as authentic but insincere, and another who was not authentic, but was sincere.

Jordan was the first ConnectED guest educator I observed in a classroom setting. When I walked into the classroom, they student's eyes were glued to the screen at the front of the classroom where Jordan had put on a news clip in which they had been interviewed. Jordan was an author of children's books and the clip showed them discussing the development and sales of their books. Jordan held themselves up as an aspirational image for students, making statements like, "you can be what you want", "I had to work hard even when I wanted to play… you have to grind even when everyone else is sleeping," and "I make royalties when I'm here talking to you. Sounds like a good life, right?" Jordan struggled to maintain student attention and compliance during most of the class, and Robin, who happened to be on site that day, would pull particular students to the side to help get the class back on track. However, the class listened with rapt attention as Jordan did a live reading of one of their books, clapping at the conclusion. Jordan smiled and noted, "That book took me an hour to write, and I've sold 2000 copies". For the second part of the lesson, Jordan prepared students to watch a short documentary about death row inmates and used the post-video discussion to warn students about the dangers of jail, of hanging around with "the wrong crowd".

Jordan's approach to teaching this class was based in aspiration and inspiration, using themselves as a model for students to look up to. They assured students that they were like them, pointing out the classroom window in Gentilly as they said, "I'm from this neighborhood. I used to play in this park right here." As the early news clip finished playing, they said to the students, "You notice how I'm speaking correctly?... I love to help kids accomplish their dreams." I perceived these messages as a typical kind of black professional uplift politics and noted how, with the exception of the reading from Jordan's book, the students were relatively unengaged. At one point, Robin interrupts student talking (when they are not "supposed to") to remind them that ConnectED "brings interesting people to your classroom, so let's give (Jordan) our eyes and make sure our voices are off!" Jordan had all the markers of an authentic role model for these students as someone from this neighborhood (though students in this school attend from all over the city), a black successful author who carried themselves with the sartorial and linguistic markers of middle class respectability. But something about them left these students cold. Yes, they weren't trained in disciplinary techniques like permanent employees of the school, but I would later observe other guest educators with similar levels of training as they held student's attention for the whole class period. Something about Jordan wasn't connecting with this group.

Months later, I would share these observations about Jordan's lesson with Robin as part of my concerns about the racialized performance politics of ConnectED. I told Robin that I thought Jordan wasn't connecting with kids because they were holding themselves above the students as a model of middle class black respectability rather than trying to build relationships. Robin took this observation seriously, replying,

> This is really helpful for me. Superficially, it was like a career day talk. This makes me think about Liberty, they're a poet, and as I watched them they were performing but they weren't putting on a show. That had me thinking like, Jordan is awesome, but there was

> an inauthenticity to that lesson because it was about them, like I'll say what ConnectED wants me to say. Liberty, they went to a kid who said something rude to them, they had a quiet conversation with the student, like "why would you speak to me like that?", it was more authentic. Maybe that sticks with the student more? If a school does a quick observation, they might be more impressed with Jordan than Liberty because Jordan is putting on a show and Liberty is doing subtler relationship building. They wouldn't be as wowed.

What Robin is characterizing here as authentic or inauthentic fits within the Jackson rubric of sincerity. Jordan wasn't misrepresenting themselves to students, they did share certain affinities with students, but they were presenting themselves according to a set of dominant standards disconnected from the perspectives of students in the classroom. Jordan was authentic but insincere. Liberty on the other hand is portrayed by Robin as performing the markers of cultural authenticity through poetry, but ultimately being more concerned with holding students accountable to them. Mandy, another guest educator who I will discuss in more detail later in the chapter, also emphasized the importance of listening to and talking to students.

There is a tension within ConnectED's attempts to bring cultural enrichment to charter schools. The company's vison statement says, "We envision a world where the boundaries between schools and communities are fluid and permeable, where talents of community members are seamlessly integrated into a child's education and where each moment of learning has the potential to surprise, excite, inspire, empower and comfort." Through the examples of Jordan and Liberty, Robin knows that school leaders have different ways of perceiving the success of this vision. Will they go for the show, for easily recognizable markers of cultural authenticity, or will they appreciate the subtle and sincere relationship building that guest educators like Liberty and Mandy do, drawing on affinities at a finer grained level? Robin may want to bring the latter to schools, but the former may be what keeps them in the black.

Flexibility

One of the amusing idiosyncrasies of Incubator is the extent to which they embrace improv comedy as a training tool and ConnectED is no exception to this tendency. As discussed in chapter 4, Incubator works with many clients whose experiences in high stakes charter schools and audit cultures with punitive accountability have led them to operate in risk averse and individualistic ways, only seeking to replicate proven methods of success. In order to transform these subjects into education entrepreneurs who know how to learn from failure and operate socially, Incubator has to find ways to loosen them up and finds improv comedy exercises to be an effective tool. During the summer of 2014, I attended ConnectED's summer orientation for new guest educators and at each session, the group played improv games at the beginning of the day.

Robin told the group that they liked to use improv because it taught them the ability to improvise and increased their willingness to fail before introducing the facilitator. The facilitator for these improv sessions was also a guest educator for ConnectED and an experienced improv comedian. Before explaining any specific exercises, they explained to the group that "Improv is not just comedy. It's a way to approach comedy, but it's not just comedy… It's a way to make your team look better… It's a way to learn how to listen." I participated with the group as we played several standard improv games, such as "Yes and…" where participants present scenarios to each other and then have to build on them without negating anything from their partner. Part of learning to fail here was learning to be OK with looking silly, with telling a bad joke, with having miscommunications but rolling with them. These improv games were meant to inculcate a flexibility that is a prized attribute of contemporary labor regimes and education reform in particular. Whereas "flexibility" for managerial No Excuses reform primarily means at-will

employment, willingness to work long hours, and positivity and culture fit (as seen in chapter 2), Incubator, ConnectED and other design thinkers use improv comedy as a tool to cultivate a sense of flexibility that prizes innovation and experimentation, sociality, and risk taking. This contrast shows how the terms of "neoliberal" labor regimes are contested and reconfigured on the ground.

Flexibility also means different things to the ConnectED contractors and potential guest educators as well. In one sense, it is a sign of their availability in the reserve army. As a *Mother Jones* article on black teachers notes, the United States is currently seeing the number of black teachers fall drastically in public schools (Rizga 2016). The article explicitly connects this decline to accountability focused education reform citing education research,

> Chris Emdin, an associate professor of education at Columbia University and the author of For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too, told me that many black educators leave because they are forced to become the kind of teachers they resented when they went to urban schools. "They want to teach in urban spaces because they want to undo that damage that they've experienced," Emdin, a former teacher, told me. "They say, 'I hated school. I want to teach math, English, science in an engaging way.' And the minute you try to be more creative, the principal says, 'Nope. You gotta do more test prep. You gotta follow the curriculum.' At every turn they are being told that they can't do what they know in their spirit and heart and soul is the right thing to do. It's causing teachers to leave, students to fail, and it's making these schools factories of dysfunction" (ibid).

The kinds of local and diverse talent that ConnectED targets in its business model are flexible in part because they are available and subject to labor precarity in ways that have increased over the course of the 21st century. Robin and Sidney will often frame this flexibility in more benign terms, focusing on the ways that retired teachers, grad students, and artists value flexibility in work hours and conditions as a lifestyle choice. They have also talked about how a successful ConnectED teacher will allow permanent teachers to rest and recharge, implying that guest educators could be a kind of release valve for the intense work hours and ethics of No Excuses

charter schools. It is true that many of their guest educators do not want to become full time teachers, and the idea of part time teaching work outside of the strictures of No Excuses accountability structures can be appealing. But to only consider those desires at face value ignores how they may be shaped by the political economy and labor economy of the time, how people can come to believe themselves to want things that they are forced into by circumstance.

As much as Robin and Sidney like to frame the Connect guest educator as taking up a calling, it is still very much a job, and at their summer orientation, they were reminded of this by their potential contractors. After listening to Robin and Sidney talk about community building, after playing improv games, after hearing an impromptu speech from Sage (from chapter 3) about the importance of the work that they were doing, I could sense a certain impatience from members of the group. This impatience expressed itself when potential teachers would ask brass tacks questions about the job during "community building" segments. Multiple group members would ask, "when are we going to start working?" or "when will we be paid?" It was the summer still, so work was very slow at ConnectED and wouldn't pick up until September. At one point, about three quarters into the orientation, the teachers were given a choice to continue practicing teaching techniques, or to discuss logistics. The teachers voted overwhelmingly to talk about logistics. They asked again about when there would be more work and at which schools. They asked about opportunities for full time employment that may grow out of these part time engagements. They asked about competition from the traditional substitute teaching company. These questions somewhat pierced the bubble of community that Robin and Sidney were trying to build. I told them afterwards that I thought it would be helpful to address these logistical concerns upfront at the next orientation.

Sidney was more in touch with these workaday concerns as they spent the most time communicating with guest educators and principals, waking up by 5 to start a flurry of text messages, confirming with principals how many substitutes they needed, making sure guest educators knew where they were supposed to go and at what time, responding to needs in the classroom as they came up, reassuring school leaders when they had reservations about a contractor. When permanent positions come up at schools contracting with ConnectED, Sidney tries to advocate for guest educators to be hired permanently, even if this means losing a source of value for the company, "We are losing some of our best people, which is not good for our bottom line, but good for society." As much as Sidney believes in the work they do, they are aware of its limits, saying, "We could be criticized for just gathering crumbs for local teachers". Sidney tries to balance the mission of the business with the real needs of their talent pool, claiming that teaching is "like a calling for a lot of our educators, they want a good job, benefits, consistency, stability, these are not radical desires for anyone to have." Sidney thinks that compared to alternative certification organizations, ConnectED is better placed to bring people into the classroom who "aren't on that track" to start with. Here, ConnectED comes to embrace flexibility as a tool of social justice, cutting through the marginalizing tendencies of credentials and social capital in order to bring people into the classroom who are called, but not qualified, at least in the official sense.

One of these guest educators, a New Orleans native I call Emory, was hired as a kind of disciplinary dean full time at one of the schools ConnectED frequently worked with.[4] When I interviewed Emory, they expressed an ethic of flexibility that was both a critique of current pedagogical practices at New Orleans charter schools as well as a personal philosophy for

[4] (citation about black teachers being assigned to discipline roles)

navigating dominant institutional settings. Emory had been involved with various mentoring activities and volunteer efforts with children for most of their adult life, including coaching sports teams at different New Orleans schools. Emory came to ConnectED after being referred to Sidney when they applied for a permanent position at another organization. They made sure to emphasize their capability of taking on multiple roles at different schools, noting, “My main job has been as a sports coach, but I also fill in for classes at other schools… Sidney said they would suggest me because of the presence I bring, the adaptability. Sidney put enough trust in me to take on different jobs. They wanted me to do a paraprofessional job, but I didn't have my certification yet, so mainly I do sports and minor assistance in classrooms.” Emory took pride in being able to navigate diverse institutional settings, telling me, “I really stress adaptation to your environment in the fullest… I can cover my tattoos with a suit. I can talk so you can't see my gold teeth. I can change how I talk. Just because you see it don't mean you gotta be it… I like Jordan's. I like nice clothes, but I don't get caught up in the hype.” Emory shows how flexibility can be taken up as a means for subverting dominant hierarchies of cultural capital, even if only in a partial and individualized manner.

Emory was happy to work at the schools they were sent to before securing their permanent position, but they critiqued each of them for a kind of inflexibility that they believed was bad for students. Emory felt that many teachers at these No Excuses schools adhered to strictly to official doctrine, to the impediment of their teaching abilities, saying “You can't be a robot, you gotta do what you do… Everyone can't be the same way.” They cited classroom management and discipline rules as the arenas where teachers were the most robotic, but that as good teacher, one had to improvise based on the circumstances, saying,

> The expectations was all on me to keep them active in a positive manner… They trusted me to do their thing in sports… But in other settings I was given an agenda or I would follow a curriculum… Sometimes I would deviate depending on how the students were doing or if they finished early. One time we ran out of activities and I found out that some of the students were learning their numbers in Spanish. I had these students teach each other the numbers and when the head teacher came back they sang the numbers to her. The teacher ran out the room and went to go grab the principal and the dean. I thought I was in trouble! But when she came back, it was to show off what the students were doing, they were really impressed… I don't do everything according to how they tell me to do it, but I do follow guidelines… I wish some teachers would understand that even if you have a curriculum, you have to do how you feel… (rough transcript)

Emory feels that it is their willingness to go beyond rules, procedures and expectations that makes them a good teacher. However, this isn't only a tactical maneuver, but a mechanism of self-expression. Three times in the comments above, ("everyone can't be the same way", "you gotta do what you gotta do" and "do how you feel") Emory asserts expressive individualism as a key aspect of good teaching. Emory's ethic of flexibility licenses them to both adapt to situations and to become themselves.

As we can see in the operations of ConnectED, flexibility is such a powerful keyword, in the sense Raymond Williams uses the term (1976), because it operates on so many levels, from subjectivity, to work life, to team building. It is no accident that ConnectED's talent pool is both more subject to and engaged with discourses of flexibility than the mostly white full time teachers and administrators at New Orleans charter schools. Black teachers have become more flexible in New Orleans and nationally as a matter of availability and precarity, both as black teachers face dwindling job prospects and as black workers as a whole are marginalized in the labor market. As rents in New Orleans have skyrocketed in the post-Katrina decade, artists and other creative workers have been forced to seek more diverse income streams to make ends meet. When Robin pitches flexibility as a key attribute of ConnectED, they do more than sell ease of

use. When ConnectED markets flexibility, it mobilizes all of these conditions of possibility into a business model. The skill of the business is to weave all these racialized strands of flexibility into a package that is useful and intelligible for both schools and contractors, a skill which requires great privilege, but also facility with the racial politics of the current reform landscape.

Accountability and Fugitivity

Accountability is one of the crucial keywords for understanding the racial politics of education reform in places like New Orleans. The word came to be explicitly used as a matter of politics and policy in the years since the George W. Bush administration deployed its "No Child Left Behind" policies. The idea behind the program was that schools would be measured by quantitative test scores, that these scores would be judged against school demographics and other factors like year over year improvement, and that schools would see funding adjustments and closures as consequences for poor performance. These measures were developed in order to hold public schools accountable for poor performance, particularly in struggling urban districts serving poor students and students of color, districts like New Orleans. But it would be a mistake to think that accountability only belongs to the testing movements of the early 21st century. Over twenty years before No Child Left Behind, the Ronald Reagan administration's National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report titled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. This report tied the fate of the nation to declining public schools and called for new standards for curriculum as well market sensitive compensation for teachers. This report contributed to narratives of public schools being in crisis due to their bureaucratic structures at the same time that the "aggressive neglect" of public schools and other aspects of the public sphere was becoming fully realized under the Reagan administration. The framing of public schools as "in crisis" proliferated over the course of the 1980's and 90's through media,

academia, and popular culture and functioned as the ideological bedrock for the idea that schools needed to be reformed and held accountable. It is no accident that Teach for America was founded in the late 80's at the height of this discursive assemblage.

No Excuses charter schools in New Orleans have embraced test based accountability and been held up as an intensification of audit cultures in public education. The idea of the charter is that a private operator will contract with a state government empowered authorizer to run one or more schools on the condition that they meet certain performance targets defined by the state. In exchange for promising to meet these targets, the charter management organizations are free from the kinds of regular oversight that traditional public schools are subject to, such as direct supervision and administration by district superintendents and centralized budgeting provisions from the district office. The meanings of accountability proliferate beyond test scores, budgets, and school closure however. As discussed in chapters 2, accountability structures the daily working life of teachers in charter schools such that it recalibrates solidarity between teachers and relationships with management. In chapter 4, we saw how Incubator used design thinking to create experimental and epistemic mechanisms for accountability to community through an emphasis on user-centered design. ConnectED itself also brings new faces to accountability in education reform both through its formation as a for profit venture and through the space it opens up for guest educators to pursue their own agendas at charter schools.

One of the first questions I asked Robin in our early interviews was why they decided to form ConnectED as a for-profit business rather than a non-profit organization. I was surprised when Robin replied by framing the decision as a matter of accountability, rather than other motivations. Robin told me they were "sick of the non-profit world," after having worked as an administrator in one of New Orleans growing number of education non-profits after Hurricane

Katrina. Robin's position in particular put them close to fundraising, so they had an intimate sense of the kinds of demands and responsibilities required of a non-profit organization head to cultivate donors. Robin insisted that by relying on schools as customers (and seed capital from investors) for funding streams, they would be more accountable to schools and students, saying,

> The for-profit model is more accountable and efficient… I thought I could do more as a self-sustaining organization. That was one of the biggest kudos I got. Wendy Kopp asked me: "Why aren't you a non-profit or a b-corp?" I said you could go bigger as a non-profit, but investors are going to have demands. I still feel good about the decision. There's more accountability, greater efficiencies, people take you more seriously. As a non-profit, you rely on donors instead of your own decision making. If anything, as a b-corps, you have a double bottom line, your profit bottom line and your impact bottom line, and investors care equally about both of those. People think you're not as focused on sustainability if you're a b-corp… People will think you're unimpeachable if you have a non-profit, but the decision making process and accountability of being a business means we have to make better decisions, faster. We can't waste time coming up with a strategy. At the end of the day, everyone wants to make money… if you don't have the money to pay for staff, space, etc. it doesn't matter what your intentions are.

One of the arguments levied against "school privatization" and "market-based reform" is that they create structures of accountability that are unresponsive to community needs and democratic norms, something that can only be properly done in a healthy and robust public sphere. What Robin poses here is that the for-profit and private model can be more responsive and accountable by its reliance on customer business, showing how the distinctions between public and private don't have predefined relationships to keywords like accountability, but rather that the distinctions between public and private are precisely where the meanings of these keywords are worked out (Gal 2002).

Just because ConnectED guest educators are hired to do a particular job doesn't mean that job is the only thing that happens when they are on campus. In interviews with Emory and Mandy, it became clear that they took their presence in school as an opportunity to disrupt school

disciplinary and cultural systems with their own notions of accountability. As discussed in chapter 2, the charter school classroom is a heavily surveilled space, as a direct result of the audit and accountability cultures favored by education reformers. ConnectED guest educators were often subject to this kind of oversight, particularly when first starting out at a particular school. For example, during Jordan's lesson earlier in the chapter, in addition to Jordan, the other adults in the room included myself, Robin, and one or two teachers and administrators from the school who would check in from time to time. However, depending on the specific job and class, the capacities of the school administrators that day, and their trust in the specific guest educator, teachers like Emory and Mandy were often left alone with little supervision. Since they weren't responsible for testing subjects, they were left to their own devices so long as students were perceived to be well behaved and non-disruptive. Emory and Mandy used this relative freedom as a space of "fugitivity", in the sense that Fred Moten uses the term, where black subjects pursue their own political projects under the radar while inhabiting dominant institutions (Harney and Moten 2013).

Emory characterized the role with ConnectED as being a kind of advocate or liaison for kids, interceding when they felt that school disciplinary cultures were damaging to students from their community. Emory told me,

> A school might want to take a disciplinary action against a student and I try to intervene so they don't get kicked out or suspended. I see if I can intercept that so they're (the student) in school. I was at (one school), there was a young girl who had the top scores in math in 9th grade, but in 10th grade her grades is just pitiful, like just ridiculous. I went there just to intervene and see how their policies was. Their policies was unorthodox. I said you have to understand the environment they come from… You need to explain your policies to students… Kids are coming from places where their parents are working when they get out of schools and communication is important… If they get caught doing something with their phone it gets taken away for a week. I have a serious problem with that and I told them you cannot do that. Take it for that day and give it back at the end,

> you don't know what's going on where they need that phone… A lot of kids are on their own after school and they need that communication… Another problem I had is their suspension rate was really high, and I tried to figure out why. Basically, the smallest things they would suspend a child for and I tried to figure out what's really going on… They had a bad problem with suspensions, and I had a problem with that… They were sending kids home on public transit if parents couldn't pick them up. You can't do that, they're minors… They would literally send them home on the bus… What if something happens to them on the bus? But nobody was calling them on it… Since then they have reevaluated how they do it… That made me want to get more involved… At one point, I studied to be a teacher, but I didn't want to be in that environment, but god pushes me back in this direction…

Rather than treating their role as a guest educator as a precarious and fragile role, Emory embraced the power of liminality to communicate to schools where their disciplinary policies were harmful and out of sync with the lived realities of black, low income students at the schools in which they worked. Emory was hired as someone that schools felt could keep students in line according to prevailing discipline structures, but their arrival was also an opening for the partial transformation of these systems.

Whereas Emory criticized school discipline systems because they didn't make sense or were blind to the situational specificities of school populations, Mandy displayed a far more irreverent attitude towards classroom management at the school in which they were placed as a guest educator. After asking Mandy if there were a lot of rules at their placement school Mandy replied,

> Mandy: Yeah, and I'm like, fuck that, there were a lot of rules like walking silently in the halls and on lines.
>
> CPT: Were you held accountable to these rules?
>
> Mandy: My main goal was not to be a tyrannical educator. I'm teaching poetry, I can't tell them what to do. We use story circles, techniques from the Free Southern Theater… I told students I wouldn't make them follow all the rules, but they need to be aware of how other teachers would. Let the kids be kids, but let them know they are operating in a

> certain structure and that's fucked up also, and we would talk about that also. In our class we read about discipline… One of my kids told me their teacher told them that if they got sent to the quiet place one more time they would call the police on them! This fucking fiasco… I asked students to tell me about times they've gotten in trouble. They all had stories about getting in trouble just for being kids. It really does impact them. They feel like they are bad kids. That whole structure of treating them like robots, the world doesn't work like that. That sounds like a motherfucking prison to me… If Ruby Bridges was to go back to that school she would be fucking horrified!
>
> CPT: did the school notice, or were you just doing your own thing, was there any friction?
>
> Mandy: We didn't have too much interaction with teachers after school. I don't think the principal liked me too much, she yelled at my kids real bad one time. I'm like, just fire me then…I was told by Mary that it was appreciated how I went the extra mile to connect to kids… I once talked to a kid who got put out of their classroom and they said every time I get put out my dad hits me… Their teachers probably never asked, it was so confrontational all the time… I wanted to make sure my classroom environment was positive, fun, different… I would not allow that to be done to my children…. You could see how different they (the students) were after school… It was great to see that transformation, but disheartening to think how they had to be all day…One time, I asked students if they could change one thing about their school, what would it be and they asked if one day they could wear their real clothes.

Even more explicitly than Emory, Mandy treats their classroom as a space of fugitivity. We should be under no illusions that the space that Emory and Mandy and other teachers make within the disciplinary confines of charter schools as contracted and precarious educators is a revolutionary remaking of the reform system. However, such infrapolitical openings show accountability to be a field of uneven contestation, rather than uniform domination. If the entrepreneurial model of ConenctED can be used to extract value from the flexibility and authenticity of its talent pool, it can also create a space in which these same educators call the customers to account for the racialized disciplinary cultures.

Conclusions

New Orleans is often depicted as an exceptional cultural sphere within the United States, in part due to its unique mixture of cultural influences. Dawdy's historical anthropology of French Colonial New Orleans challenges many of the preconceived notions of New Orleans essential hybridity (Dawdy 2008). I call on this concept here not to suggest a smooth articulation between colonial era New Orleans and the present day, but to call attention to her analysis of the production of New Orleans as a creole space in the face of local concerns and imperial interventions. Devore and Logsdon have thoroughly documented the persistence of outside intervention in the creation and historical transformation of New Orleans public schools 9Devore and Logsdon 1991). This dynamic is critical to an examination of conflicts over authenticity in New Orleans public schools. Dawdy develops a definition of the creole and creolization that emphasizes the creation of new worlds and social systems out of the confluence of social types present in colonial encounters. The creole is not the hybrid distillation of pure native and foreign influence, but a "hybrid of hybrids" created out of the improvisational and unpredictable outcomes of colonial social experiments. If there is something unique about New Orleans cultural heritage, Dawdy singles out the material basis by which New Orleans became fertile ground for the kinds of experimentation which led to creolization.

By thinking of recent attempts by education reformers to build community relations under the rubric of creolization, we can see them as part of historical patterns of the production of new social worlds in New Orleans. Attempts at increasing staff and student diversity, or better understanding particular ideas of community and history are not necessarily cynical manipulations of multiculturalist logic, but can also be viewed as sincere renegotiations of the frontier between insider and outsider. These efforts are never fully successful and can lead to unexpected outcomes. However, outsiders don't necessarily stay outsiders, at least in the same

way, nor do locals remain unshaped by colonial encounters. While it is important to attend to the ways that outside interventions have displaced and harmed local interests, it is just as vital to examine the ways in which the dividing lines between the two are shifted, blurred, and displaced as emergency measures extend into more permanent engagements.

ConnectED is but one example of a growing scene of educational entrepreneurs in New Orleans. While on its face this company is trying to fill a niche for charter school savvy substitute teachers, the means by which they conduct this business is through the entrepreneur-ialization, recognition, and regulation of racialized identity. This process happens openly through the mobilization of local black culture as a value for schools and an employment asset for guest teachers, but also less explicitly through Robin and Sidney's mobilization of race and class privilege to gain entrée into their desired markets. Guest educators function both as aspiration and risk, meant to cement new forms of community with schools in ways that are not yet certain. The story of ConnectED is instructive for the ways that it shows how sophisticated productions of racialized and localized identity aren't necessarily alien to reform efforts and may indeed be the key to their persistence. The way charters and reformers can become recognized as belonging to New Orleans may become increasingly subject to the authority and recognition of brokers with the social capital and connections to translate and navigate between disparate social strata. These efforts can certainly create the appearance of diversity, engagement with community and tradition. They can creolize charter schools in the sense that Dawdy uses the term. However, without fundamentally altering the power structures and material basis of school control, this creolization will could instead serve to relocate the loci of cultural production into more regulated forms.

However, ConnectED's brokering, as well as other turns toward community such as TFA's recent announcement of its most diverse corps to date, is marked not by cynicism but by sincerity, as John Jackson puts it. If we get stuck in evaluating the business by the standards of authenticity it's too easy to write off their work as a manipulation of social privilege and marginalization to fill a market niche. But if they fail tests of authenticity, they are much more adept at mobilizing racial sincerities, which are no less real. They may not be connecting schools with communities of marginalized educators in a politically contentious manner or shifting the overall hiring patterns and incentives of charter networks, but they are creating new and real forms of community and new terms for recognizing community. The danger is if these forms of brokered interaction crowd out and displace other visions and actors. If ConnectED continues to grow and succeed, charter schools may look to them as an authority on "community" and veteran educators rather than older organizations like the United Teachers of New Orleans, AFT Local 527. There are significant limits to the kinds of recognition in play here. Guest educators are called on to simultaneously be authentic to themselves and their communities and authentic to the disciplinary cultures of charter schools, a task which may be impossible. These competing authenticities are not even, with the latter paying for limited latitude with the former. While Sidney and Robin would hope that a track record of success would give their flexible employees more freedom to be themselves in the classroom and transform schools conceptions of who can be a good teacher, the possibility remains that their interventions in between school leaders and native guests will have to be a more enduring feature of their business model. At the same time that they advocate on behalf of marginalized educators, they also help to define the limits of their participation in the charter school environment.

EPILOGUE

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IN?

In the final months of my field research in the summer of 2014, I attended the beginning of the year professional development sessions at the two charter schools I had followed closely over the course of the previous academic period. Like many charter school networks, these two schools required teachers to begin their academic work year weeks before students arrived, much earlier than most traditional public schools. I experienced this myself as I reported to work in 2008 three weeks before my fellow TFA corps members who were employed in NYC Department of Education schools. As committed as teachers in charter schools are claimed to be, the dog days of summer have a way of sapping the energy of even the most zealous. Zadie, the principal at one of these schools, needed a way to inspire her teachers and she turned to a medium often used by charter schools – the inspirational YouTube video. Clicking through her professional development powerpoint deck to a slide that said, "Do you believe?", Zadie then began playing a recording of a speech by fifth grade Dalton Sherman, delivered in 2008 to a gathering of thousands of Dallas Public School teachers. Sherman begins,

> I believe in me. Do you believe in me? Do you believe I can stand up here, fearless, and talk to all 20,000 of you? …Because here's the deal: I can do anything, be anything, create anything, dream anything, become anything – because you believe in me. And it rubs off on me. Let me ask you a question... Do you believe in my classmates? Do you believe that every single one of us can graduate ready for college or the workplace?
>
> You better. Because next week, we're all showing up in your schools – all 157,000 of us – and what we need from you is to believe that we can reach our highest potential. No matter where we come from…you better not give up on us. No, you better not.
>
> Because, as you know, in some cases, you're all we've got. You're the ones who feed us, who wipe our tears, who hold our hands or hug us when we need it. You're the ones who love us when sometimes it feels like no else does – and when we need it the most. Don't give up on my classmates.

> Do you believe in your colleagues? I hope so. They came to your school because they wanted to make a difference, too. Believe in them, trust them and lean on them when times get tough – and we all know, we kids can sometimes make it tough.
>
> So, whether you're a counselor or a librarian, a teacher assistant or work in the front office, whether you serve up meals in the cafeteria or keep the halls clean, or whether you're a teacher or a principal, we need you! Please, believe in your colleagues, and they'll believe in you.
>
> Do you believe in yourself? Do you believe that what you're doing is shaping not just my generation, but that of my children – and my children's children? There's probably easier ways to make a living, but I want to tell you, on behalf of all of the students in Dallas, we need you. We need you now more than ever. Believe in yourself.
>
> Finally, do you believe that every child in Dallas needs to be ready for college or the workplace? Do you believe that Dallas students can achieve? We need you, ladies and gentlemen. We need you to know that what you are doing is the most important job in the city today. We need you to believe in us, in your colleagues, in yourselves and in our goals. If you don't believe – well, I'm not going there. I want to thank you for what you do – for me and for so many others.
>
> Do you believe in me? Because I believe in me. And you helped me get to where I am today.

I notice that not all the teachers in the room seemed particularly enthralled and engaged while the video is playing. At the end of the playback, Zadie says to the room, "That video always gets me choked up, particularly at the point where he bows and you realize the power of words." Zadie asks the gathered staff to spend the next five minutes filling in the box on their professional development worksheet for that day titled, "What do you believe in?" When the teachers share, they talk about believing in hard work, believing in themselves, and most of all believing in "our kids".

As we've seen in the first two chapters' discussions of the human capital regimes and workplace cultures of New Orleans charter schools, charter school teachers are often depicted as fundamentally different kinds of workers and education professionals than teachers in traditional public schools. However, I've highlighted Zadie's presentation of Dalton Sherman's speech because it shows what education reformers and teachers in charter schools share with their

colleagues in traditional public schools. Sherman's speech wasn't given to a group of charter school teachers, but to the general body of Dallas public school teachers. Educators in both charters and traditional public schools tend to share many of the beliefs evoked in Sherman's speech. As the teachers in Zadie's school emphasized, I would venture that they share with the teachers in Dallas that day some kind of belief in the potential and capacity of the students they serve, the vast majority of whom are black and brown and coming from low income families and segregated communities. I would argue however, that above and beyond this common belief in the capabilities and futures of students, these educators share a stronger, but less explicitly articulated belief, one that Sherman professes in his speech.

These educators, as well as most Americans and New Orleanians, believe that their students need them, that for many teachers are "all they've got". As citizens, educators, Americans, activists, community members, stakeholders, users, and almost any other kind of way we interface with public schools, there is a bedrock belief that they are the most important tool and institution in combating systemic race and class inequality. There are differences of opinion and politics as to what constitutes this need historically, but broad agreement in its existence. The American public school first took form with the "common school" in 19th century New England. These schools were seen as community supported institutions which would provide a combination moral, spiritual, and academic instruction for youth. Thus, schools were posed as necessary for the moral formation of young people and the communities they hailed from. Over the course of the early twentieth century, regional and professional authorities wrested control of public schools away from local and religious figures, attempting to standardize curricula and craft public schools as universal institutions. Progressive reformers believed that schools should be the training grounds of democracy and develop youth above all

as intelligent citizens. This vision of school has remained dominant through the present, but has been challenged by the proliferation of charter schools. Charter schools, in New Orleans as well as nationally, disproportionately serve low-income students of color and broadly express the belief that they are the best mechanism for saving their students from entrenched racialized poverty. In this model, schools are needed, and indeed are the only politically plausible remedy for pervasive social and economic inequalities. Teachers and administrators at charter schools as well as policy makers often refer to the need to prepare American students to be competitive in a "global marketplace". While it may seem that we have moved from a Puritan, to a Fordist, to a neoliberal model of education, I would argue that there is a recursive and recuperative (Stoler 2016) logic at play here. The idea that low income students of color are in need of the tutelage of schooling is as much a moral and spiritual project as that of the common school, and the idea that they must be prepared to be competitive on the global marketplace is as much a reconfiguration and recommitment to citizenship as a rejection of it in favor of cosmopolitan economic subjectivities. On the other hand, charter schools intensified commitment to schools as economic preparation are perhaps as much a reflection of the prevailing insecurities and precarity wrought by deindustrialization and the evisceration of the social safety net as any kind of philosophical project.

One of the distinguishing beliefs of charter proponents is that schools alone can combat racial and class inequality. This belief persists despite decades of evidence that broader socio-economic factors have a far greater impact on education and life outcomes than the efforts of schools themselves (Noguera 2016). Pedro Noguera suggests that schools cannot improve the lives of low income students and students of color without a focus on equity, both within public education and in our broader society. I would agree with Noguera that too much weight is placed

on schools as a lever for ameliorating the effects of racial capitalism. At best, schooling can help a limited number of individuals in marginalized communities better strategically navigate the challenges of the day. This is no small deal. I'm sitting here writing these words in no small part due to investments in education programs for "at-risk youth" that facilitated my entry into elite educational institutions. Indeed, more than ensuring my relative privileges as a black professional academic, educational interventions literally change and save lives and I would not besmirch or denigrate the work that millions of educators do around the United States to impact the lives of these students. But this work alone is not a systemic or transformative response to structural violence. What if we rejected the notion that schools should serve a strategic meritocratic function at all? What kinds of theory and politics might emerge from this kind of utopian refusal? This is not a rejection of the idea that schools can serve some kind of beneficial social or political purpose. Indeed, education has much to recommend it for its own sake. What I want to reject, as a utopian exercise in the sense of Kathi Weeks refusal of work (Weeks 2014), is the idea that public schools have any bearing on "solving" the question of racialized class inequality.

In *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* Fred Moten asks,

> Consider the following statement: "There's nothing wrong with blackness": What if this were the primitive axiom of a new black studies underived from the psycho-politico-pathology of populations and its corollary theorisation of the state or of state racism; an axiom derived, as all such axioms are, from the "runaway tongues" and eloquent vulgarities encrypted in works and days that turn out to be of the native or the slave only insofar as the fugitive is misrecognized, and in bare lives that turn out to be bare only insofar as no attention is paid to them, only insofar as such lives persist under the sign and weight of a closed question? (Harney and Moten 2013).

In this passage, Moten challenges decades of social science orthodoxy as well as both conservative and liberal interventions in to the problem of racialized inequality. Even the most

sympathetic approaches, like the Moynihan Report, still posit black people as being in need of correction. "What does it feel like to be a problem?" Indeed. Moten's refusal of the idea that there is anything wrong with blackness, and by some extension black people is not a bid for a liberal universalist equality. Moten notes that

> once you crossed the Atlantic, you were never on the right side again… Can this being together in homelessness, this interplay of the refusal of what has been refused, this undercommon appositionality, be a place from which emerges neither self-consciousness nor knowledge of the other but an improvisation that proceeds from somewhere on the other side of an unasked question? (Harney and Moten 2013).

In these two passages Moten rejects both Hegelian universality and Foucauldian biopolitics. What kind of education politics are possible if we rejected the notion that black students and communities were deficient and deviant, or in a more liberal technocratic key, that they were in need of improvement and capacity building? What if we refused the idea that the solution to racialized class inequality was the incorporation of black subjects into a universal body politics? What kinds of politics could emerge from this otherwise?

The entire logic of contemporary education reform falls apart if the subjects of schooling no longer need them, or rather no longer believe they need education in the ways that currently prevail. By posing schools as the sole institution necessary for combating inequality, charter schools betray not only a belief in the need of students to be improved, but also the belief that improvement is the key to incorporation into a universal body politic, that there are no fundamental racialized cleavages in society. Given that every universal is a provincial identity in masquerade (Butler, Laclau, Zizek 2000), the universal ethic is ultimately an imperial denial and suppression of difference, and one that can never fully succeed (Babha 1984). Moten's "refusal of what has been refused" can be read as a call to reject the universal yet provincial subject positions that have been refused black people throughout American history. Crucially, this is not

a pessimistic politics, but one tentatively hoping for transformation through its refusal of false universals and the promises of biopolitics.

These refusals need not be destructive or internalist. Both Audra Simpson and Carol McGranahan note how refusals are not necessarily the end or ends of politics but can be socially productive stances. McGranahan (2016) claims that refusals of received categories of political belonging can be generative and create new kinds of cultural and political community. Simpson (2016) poses refusal as a "theory of the political" and that indigenous refusal to recognize the legitimacy of settler colonial states and disavow the foundation violence of dispossession is a claim to sovereignty, writing ""The people of Kahnawa`:ke used every opportunity to remind non-Native people that this is not their land, that there are other political orders and possibilities." We can see attenuated forms of these kinds of refusals among the "racial brokers" discussed in Chapter 3. When Darcy, Sage, and Aubrey put mostly white transplant reformers in rooms with local black elders and community authorities, there is a subtle game of refusal at play. These brokers are communicating to these reformers that though they may have seized control of school governance from the "backbone of the black middle class", their authority was not only wrapped up in these institutions. They have a cultural and communal authority that the brokers display not necessarily with the goal of creating mutual understanding. Aubrey may want her teachers to connect with students and community elders, but Darcy, Garvey and the BOC seek to reclaim territory for black leadership that need not be understood by white reformers, only respected. Refusals may be generative, but they need not be progressive or radical.

Unchallenged by proponents of any kind of school is the idea that education should be organized as a form of work. What would it mean to refuse teaching and schooling as work? I can't imagine it, in part because this would require imagining a society without work, a task just

beyond the horizon. But what kinds of consequences and articulations could emerge when we try to think education within a broader post-work politics (Weeks 2011)? As discussed in chapter 2, it is crucial to go beyond critiquing the working conditions of teachers in charter schools and apprehend the racial politics of professionalizing education labor as work itself. It speaks to the embeddedness of productivist ethics in both American and capitalist society that refusing work in totality seems so unthinkable. Weeks outlines the stakes of this position,

> The crucial point and the essential link to the refusal of work is that work— not private property, the market, the factory, or the alienation of our creative capacities— is understood to be the primary basis of capitalist relations, the glue that holds the system together. Hence, any meaningful transformation of capitalism requires substantial change in the organization and social value of work. …the refusal of work is not in fact a rejection of activity and creativity in general or of production in particular. It is not a renunciation of labor tout court, but rather a refusal of the ideology of work as highest calling and moral duty, a refusal of work as the necessary center of social life and means of access to the rights and claims of citizenship, and a refusal of the necessity of capitalist control of production (Weeks 2011).

In chapter 1, I argued that charter schools' conceptions of talent and human capital atomized teachers as a racial leadership class. In chapter 2, I argued that these schools embrace "emotional labor regimes" which militate against the endurance of teachers and employees who aren't socially isolated enough to devote extended hours to work. In both chapters, the figure of the veteran teacher (likely black given the district makeup before Katrina) who asks what time school gets out is used to indicate their unsuitability for the charter school workplace. One could view these veterans as having a lack of fit, as most charter schools do. However, I prefer to see the implicit limits as important refusals of work. In education reform, any limit to work intensity is seen as harmful to children. Rather than view the demands of veteran teachers, of teachers with families, or of teachers who don't want to work eighty hour weeks as selfish, we should see these as potentially liberating refusals of work. Supporting these demands could help break the link between work and schooling.

Refusal is not an easy thing to do, however, even when one recognizes its potential. In classical Marxist theories of ideology, the problem of ideology is that people are not aware of the oppressive contradictions of capital that the experience in their social lives. Thus, all the revolutionary needs to do is educate the people as to the reality of the world and liberation will follow. Zizek (1989) points out that this account of the epistemological politics of revolution has not been borne out by history, and indeed it is mistaken. Zizek re-reads Marxist theories of ideology thus,

> …we have established a new way to read the Marxian formula 'they do not know it, but they are doing it': the illusion is not on the side of knowledge, it is already on the side of reality itself, of what the people are doing. What they do not know is that their social reality itself, their activity, is guided by an illusion, by a fetishistic inversion. What they overlook, what they misrecognize, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity. They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the ideological fantasy (ibid).

In all my time in the field, I was hard pressed to find any zealots, despite all the talk above about what educators believe. As Stoler (1996) has claimed, even seemingly dominant political formations are wracked by doubt and insecurity.

Most education professionals expressed reservations about the project of charter schools. Principals and teachers would complain about the ways that testing warped their pedagogical imperatives, yet they committed long hours to test prep and impressed upon their students the importance of state tests. These educators may have disliked or even hated testing, but they acted as if test-based accountability was not only inevitable, but correct. While there are plenty of charter school advocates who will defend strict discipline policies, many teachers I spoke with found it profoundly alienating to enforce silence, march children along taped lines on hallway

floors, display zero tolerance for minor infractions, move children's names up and down charts to indicate their behavioral performance for the day, yell at children, call parents about "behavior problems", suspend students, or reward students for "good behavior", to name a few classroom management techniques. Nevertheless, the vast majority of teachers in these school proceeded to teach as if these discipline structures were necessary and desirable. I know this from personal experience. "What do you believe in?" can be an insidiously taunting question.

Refusal is one of the great promises of anthropology. At our best, we refuse to take the world for granted, and in so doing hold out the possibility that the world could be otherwise. But our powers of demystification can only take us so far. In this project, I have not sought to pull back the curtain on the Wizard of Racialization nor incite shock at the forms of exclusion and inequality perpetuated by the working cultures of charters schools. In each chapter of *Reconstructing Race* I have depicted individuals and communities who have deep commitments to public schooling as a mechanism of social justice and biopolitical improvement. As much as I wish to speculate on what it might look like to refuse this linkage, what their stories show is why it is so hard to do so, and how enthralled we all are to our bound fantasies of race, education, and work.

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