RHIZOMATIC RESISTANCE: TEACHER ACTIVISM AND

THE OPT-OUT MOVEMENT

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Education Studies
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

September 2018

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: Rhizomatic Resistance: Teacher Activism and the Opt-Out Movement

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Degree awarded September 2018

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Education Studies

September 2018

Title: Rhizomatic Resistance: Teacher Activism and the Opt-Out Movement

High-stakes testing has grown in scope and impact in recent years, as accountability decisions regarding funding, school sanctions, and teacher evaluations often depend on standardized test results. The shift toward more stringent and punitive testing mandates has not gone unchallenged however, as pockets of resistance have emerged among teachers, parents, and scholars, and a growing "opt-out" movement has picked up steam nationwide. Teachers in particular have played a critical role in resistance to high-stakes testing, even while adhering to these same policies in their professional roles. This study examines resistance to standardized testing via the 'opt-out' movement organizing process. I specifically look at teachers' participation in organizing and resistance, and how positions as teachers and sometimes parents influence their participation. I frame the project with a post-structuralism lens, utilizing the Deleuzoguattarian concept of the rhizome to illustrate the complex and connected nature of teachers' involvement in this social movement.
Keywords: teacher activism, assessment, testing, opt-out, policy

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

One sunny spring afternoon last year, I wound my way through the crowded hallways of my son's elementary school after dismissal. Capturing bits of students' conversations, I overheard one girl ask another, "Where's Lily?"

"Oh, she died from state testing," the student responded, and they both laughed. While said in jest, this flippant comment reflects the experience of a generation, as more than fifteen years have passed since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002. Recent high school graduates spent the entirety of their K-12 education participating in some version of standardized tests required by NCLB and other federal accountability policies.

Assessment has always been a driving force in education, and it took on greater importance in school reform with the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2002. A reauthorization of the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) originally passed in 1965, NCLB ushered in a new era of test-based accountability systems at the federal level. More current reforms such as the Race to The Top (RTTT) federal funding program in 2009 and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in 2010 further emphasized high-stakes testing practices across the nation. Testing requirements continued under the recent reauthorization of ESEA, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, although states were granted more flexibility in designing their own testing programs. High-stakes testing results are used for a variety of reasons, which include assessing student achievement among groups of students, making educational decisions based on those decisions, and informing educational policy. "High-stakes testing is the process of attaching significant

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consequences to standardized test performance with the goal of incentivizing teacher effectiveness and student achievement…High-stakes here refers to standardized tests developed specifically for the purpose of evaluating teachers and students," (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012, p. 3).

Evaluation implies a form of measurement with judgment attached, and these judgments can have far-reaching consequences when applied to schools, teachers, and students (Firestone, 2014). As educational reform legislation such as No Child Left Behind (2001) and Race to The Top (2009) led to increased accountability mandates, multiple levels of stakeholders have been affected, ranging from school districts to individual teachers and students. These policies have created greater consequences based on testing data, such as the identification of failing schools, school restructuring, and granting parents the option to remove their children from schools or use school resources for educational support (Mandinach & Honey, 2008). Various sanctions can be imposed due to standardized-test results, including changes in school and district leadership and the potential withholding of federal funds (Rose, 2011). Behuniak (2003) details the change from testing as "low-key" to "a top-down approach of using tests as a hammer to force change," as a result of accountability reforms (p. 377). Behuniak (2003) stated that "…an era of mandated testing and stringent accountability systems could have the unintended effect of disenfranchising the very individuals crucial to the public school's mission," (p. 377). As predicted by Behuniak, resistance has emerged in opposition to high-stakes testing and accountability reforms in recent years. The 'opt-out' movement has grown in response to the increased impact of high-stakes standardized testing, as important decisions regarding funding, school sanctions, and teacher evaluations often

depend on standardized test results. The opt-out movement includes parents and students who simply 'opt-out' of taking the standardized tests as a signal of resistance to testing policies, along with other stakeholders such as teachers, teacher unions, and professional organizations who participate in activism around high-stakes testing.

Statement of the Problem

A growing body of research shows that high-stakes testing and punitive accountability practices can undermine local control and teacher professionalism, perpetuate systemic inequality, and erode public education through increased privatization of public resources (Linn, 2005; Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012; Ravitch, 2013; Au, 2016). While these policies were initially intended to address problems of inequity, the results have indicated otherwise, with negative consequences reported for multiple stakeholders (Mehrens, 2002; Mandinach & Honey, 2008; Rose, 2011). Given the high-stakes consequences associated with such measures, many educators and students have come to view assessment in a negative light (Nichols & Berliner, 2005). The intensive focus on high-stakes summative testing can obscure the power of other effective assessment practices, and cause teacher and student burnout regarding assessment in general. Mehrens (2002) investigated research regarding the consequences of assessment and found that large-scale, high-stakes assessments are popular with politicians and the public, but that they contribute to lower teacher-morale and increased teacher stress.

In light of increased high-stakes testing and accountability mandates, teachers have faced a loss of autonomy and professionalism in their work. Ingersoll (2003) found that teachers have relatively little control over many key aspects of their work, including

curriculum decisions and instructional duties. Wills & Sandholtz (2009) reported that

high-stakes testing practices limited teachers' professional discretion, even in subject

areas not addressed by the tests. Researchers report a narrowing of the curriculum to

accommodate testing, and a dubious connection between testing practices and student

learning. Nichols, Glass, & Berliner (2012) examined the effect of pressure from high-

stakes testing on student achievement, and they contend that "under pressure, teachers

grow more efficient at training students for the test," (p. 27). They found that while a

correlation existed between high-stakes testing pressure and NAEP scores, those scores

didn't maintain over time, and achievement gaps persisted as well. In addition, they noted

the detrimental effects on student motivation, and reported that "most research fails to

support the contention that high-stakes testing increases student learning," (Nichols et al.,

2012, p. 4). When test scores do increase, that increase is often due to changes in teaching

practices, such as a narrowed teaching focus or 'teaching to the test,' rather than any

substantive increase in learning (Darling-Hammond & Rustique-Forrester, 2005). The

AERA Panel Report on Research and Teacher Education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005)

found that teachers generally teach to the test; if the standards are not reflected in the

tests, they may not be the central focus of instruction. The AERA report specifically

mentioned that most tests aren't aligned sufficiently to truly measure student learning

(Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005).

One particular practice that has grown in recent years is the move to evaluate

teachers based on their students' standardized test scores. In previous decades,

standardized test scores were used at a program evaluation level and weren't used to

make individual claims about student performance or teacher effectiveness (Mandinach

& Honey, 2008). That has changed recently, as more districts and states are tying their teacher evaluation procedures to standardized test data, including the use of 'value-added methods' (VAM) in an attempt to measure teachers' contribution to student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Researchers highlight the complexity of teacher effectiveness however, and note that teacher quality can't often be reduced to single student data points (Baker, Oluwole, & Green, 2013).

While there is power in data, Wilson (2012) cautions that measurement tools must be high quality to ethically justify the decisions made with resulting data. "Accountability can overemphasize that which is measurable and marginalize equally important aspects of our lives that prove less amenable to quantification. Thus, it can distort rather than enhance, constrain rather than enable," Wilson writes (p. 41). This is especially critical in teacher evaluation systems, given the high-stakes nature of employment decisions such as tenure and dismissal (Baker, Oluwole, & Green, 2013). Kennedy (2010) discusses the questionable connection between standardized assessments and teacher quality, and argues that more assessment doesn't mean better quality. Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein (2012) also assert that actual teaching involves much more than what can be measured or attributed to individual teacher actions. These scholars and other voices in education point toward growing doubt regarding the utility and justification of high-stakes testing and accountability policies, particularly regarding their impact on the teaching field.

The teaching field as a whole faces challenges in terms of recruitment and retention, and accountability policies and high-stakes testing have contributed to that pressure. Teacher turnover and attrition rates are high, with 13% of teachers moving or

leaving the profession each year, and even higher rates in high-poverty schools (Haynes, 2014). Teacher satisfaction continues to decline, recently reaching its lowest point in 25 years and dropping 23% in one year alone (Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013). Teacher stress has also increased, with over 50% of teachers reporting feeling under great stress regularly (Markow, Macia, & Lee). Low recruitment into the teaching field is another pressing concern, as evidenced by a decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs across the U.S., for example a 31% decrease from 2008 to 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The shift toward more stringent testing mandates has not gone unchallenged though, as pockets of resistance have emerged among teachers, parents, and scholars. "Opt-out" movements have picked up steam in many communities nationwide (Evans, 2016; Evans & Saultz, 2016). Various stakeholders within the field of education have pushed back against the hierarchical influence of corporate reform, ranging from noted scholars to concerned parents who 'opt-out' their children from standardized tests, resulting in shifts in local and state policy around high-stakes testing practices (Mitra, Mann, & Hlavacik, 2016). National research organizations such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2015) and the American Statistical Association (ASA, 2014) have issued strong policy statements opposing the use of high-stakes test scores and value-added modeling approaches for teacher evaluations (AERA, 2015; ASA, 2014). Another important group has risen up as well: activist teachers have flexed their organizing muscles and become involved in the growing opt-out movement. Teachers have incorporated diverse strategies to resist high-stakes testing, from organized union advocacy to school-wide testing boycotts (Behrent, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

This research study examines teacher resistance to standardized testing in the 'opt-out' movement, and the role that teachers play in policy development and implementation. This study also explores how various personal and professional roles can influence teachers' participation in activism, particularly regarding some teachers' roles as parents of school-aged children. I apply a post-structuralist perspective to delve into these interactions, through a theoretical analysis of broader issues such as power, resistance, and agency, and their role in educational reform. This study specifically takes up the Deleuzoguattarian (1987) concept of the rhizome in an analysis of resistance to high-stakes testing practices and policies. This concept lends itself to this study, as it addresses notions of multiplicity and the complex interactions that give rise to activism and resistance, as well as decentered approaches to subjectivity. This study maps the connections and interactions between various factors that drive teacher activism and educational reform, in the current context of the opt-out movement.

This analysis can inform the field of teacher education, particularly the area of teacher knowledge and beliefs, by looking at how teachers' lived experiences interact with their personal and professional subjectivities. This study also documents cases and strategies in the current unfolding of the opt-out movement, by providing a timely and relevant mapping of teachers' "learning power" (Oakes & Rogers, 2006), a framework for activism in education that emphasizes the important participatory role of teachers in enacting educational reforms. The "Learning Power" framework describes three key elements of teacher activism, which include building relational power, producing knowledge, and engaging in collective action (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Research on this

this topic can empower others in the field to engage in activism, as well as inform programs of teacher education by offering insight into how best to train, sustain, and retain engaged and committed educators. Given the challenges facing the teaching field, instances of teachers participating in social movement activism merit further exploration as examples of teachers' potential power and impact not only in the classroom, but beyond.

Scope of the Study

    Opt-Out Movement. While the opt-out movement is still young, the variations among participants and their approaches to organizing provide fertile ground for examining the role that various stakeholders play in educational policy (Bennett, 2016). Beginning around 2013, scattered groups of students, parents, and teachers engaged in resistance, including student and teacher boycotts in Seattle and parent and teacher collective organizing between parents and teacher unions in New York (Neill, 2016). Many teachers' unions supported the opt-out movement and testing reform as well, from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) at the national level to state and district unions, such as the Oregon Education Association (Ujifusa, 2016; Oregon Education Association, 2014). The movement soon spread and national opt-out rates increased each subsequent year, with thirteen states falling below the federal minimum participation rate of 95% in 2015 (Ujifusa, 2016).

    Politicians and pundits have at times characterized this movement as singular in nature, reflecting an assumption that only certain groups of parents have participated, motivated primarily by self-interest. In 2013, Arne Duncan, then-Secretary of Education, referred to this resistance as "white suburban moms who — all of a sudden — their child

isn't as brilliant as they thought they were, and their school isn't quite as good as they thought they were," (Strauss, 2013). Duncan did capture certain characteristics of opt-out participants, as higher opt-out rates have often been reported in wealthier districts (Supovitz, Stephens, Kubelka, McGuinn & Ingersoll, 2016; Bennett, 2016). A national survey reported that a 'typical' opt-out activist was white, highly-educated and married, with higher than average income (Pizmony-Levy & Green Saraisky, 2016). Recent studies have also shown that the opt-out movement represents a broad cross-section of interests and participants, and has resulted in state and federal policy shifts around high-stakes testing and accountability (Mitra, Mann, & Hlavacik, 2016).

Opt-out organizing efforts related to policy include local initiatives aimed at reducing testing requirements and granting greater opt-out rights to parents and students, which have passed in locales such as Denver, Colorado, and Lee County, Florida (Neill, 2016). State legislation has been passed as well, allowing parents to opt-out their students from standardized testing. In the past few years, over 80 opt-out bills have been filed in districts and states around the U.S., and five states have signed opt-out legislation into law, including Oregon, Utah, Wisconsin, Colorado, and Georgia (Croft & Lee, 2016). These actions have granted more local and community control over educational policies and given parents a stronger voice in their children's education.

Oregon became a trailblazer in progressively defining parents' and students' rights to opt-out of standardized testing with the passage of H.B. 2655, the 'Student Assessment Bill of Rights.' When Oregon adopted the Smarter Balanced Assessments as the state assessment system in AY 2014-2015, state regulations allowed for student opt-outs only in the case of student disability or religious preferences. Resistance emerged as the

assessments were being implemented, with pushback coming from OEA as well as local teachers' unions like the Portland Association of Teachers (Frazier, 2015). Multiple community organizations lent support to the opt-out movement, such as the Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE) of Lane County, consisting of current and retired teachers, parents, university professors, and community members. Enough Oregon students opted out of the state assessments to warrant a warning letter from the U.S. Education Department for not meeting minimum participation requirements, with a 94.7% participation in the mathematics portion (Ujifusa, 2016). Teachers played an important role in the opt-out movement in Oregon, testifying in the legislature and raising public awareness around these policies. These organizing efforts proved successful, and the Student Assessment Bill of Rights was passed in 2015 (Oregon H.B. 2655). Although this legislation drew pointed criticism from federal education officials for "proactively encouraging parents to opt students out of assessments and failing to hold districts and schools accountable," (Deslise, 2015), it passed with strong support from state legislators, community members, parents, and educators.

Research Study. In this qualitative research study, I pay particular attention to the impact of teacher involvement on educational policy and practice by examining how local organizing efforts have resulted in shifts in educational policy. I focus on the experiences and activism of local teachers during the 2015 passage and implementation of H.B. 2655, Oregon's opt-out legislation, which grants opt-out rights by parental discretion and requires districts to notify parents of their opt-out rights. This study focuses on teachers from three neighboring suburban districts in Oregon and their experiences in the opt-out movement, during the particular timeframe of the lobbying,

passage, and implementation of this legislation (2014-2017). To frame this study, I drew from critical social theories around educational reform and social movements, and post-structural and material feminist theories that address notions of power, resistance, and agency. This study builds upon recent research studies which have examined different instantiations of the opt-out movement around the U.S. Adding to the growing research base on this social movement, this study focuses on local teachers and their participation in activism which contributed to state policy change.

This study also explores how aspects of personal and professional subjectivities influence teachers' participation in activism, including some teachers' roles as parents of school-aged children. Grounded in the field of teacher education, particularly the area of teacher knowledge and beliefs, this study explores how teachers' lived experiences interact their personal and professional roles, including the role of some teachers as parents. Teacher education research seeks to understand different themes related to the work of teachers, including the lived experiences of teachers and how teachers engage in social justice in education (Noffke & Zeichner, 2006). Working with these ideas in mind, I developed the following research questions to guide this study. These questions were informed by critical qualitative theories of educational reform developed by Anyon (2005) and Oakes & Rogers (2007) and the post-structuralist concept of the rhizome developed by Deleuze & Guattari (1987).

Research Questions

1. How and why do teachers engage in activism and resistance to high-stakes testing?

   a. What types of conditions and experiences motivate teachers to engage in activism?

   b. How do teachers build relational power, produce knowledge, and engage in collective action through participation in the opt-out movement?

2. How do personal and professional subjectivities influence teacher activism?

   a. How does being a teacher influence participation in activism around education?

   b. How does being a parent influence teachers' participation in activism around education?

Summary

A social movement has emerged recently in public education, as resistance to high-stakes testing has erupted around the nation. This study examines how teachers navigate the territory between personal politics and school policies, and how some responded to standardized testing and the opt-out movement by engaging in resistance and activism. Framed by critical qualitative and post-structuralist lenses, I utilize the Deleuzoguattarian concept of the rhizome to illustrate the complex and interconnected nature of teacher activism, as well as the 'Learning Power' framework to examine the different strategies teachers used when encountering testing policies. This study can highlight the role that teachers play in implementing policy, and why some teachers choose to participate in activism or resistance to standardized testing practices.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Grassroots organizing has proven to be an effective force in changing educational policy (Fine, Ayala, & Zaal, 2012; Anyon, 2014). In response to organized resistance, five different states have passed state legislation allowing parents to opt-out their students from standardized testing, which helps ensure more community control over educational policies. As opposed to the implementation of top-down testing requirements and federal policies extending their reach down to the state and local level, local organizing efforts have resulted in grassroots changes rising from the ground up. These efforts have resulted in shifts in educational policy, for example the 2015 passage of HB 2655, Oregon's opt-out legislation. Teachers in particular have played a critical role in resistance to high-stakes testing, even while adhering to and administering these same policies in their professional roles (Malsbary, 2016).

As teachers engage in educational activism, they represent a multitude of viewpoints and intentions, which coalesce into a broader movement seeking similar outcomes. In this study, I examine how this process transpires, and particularly how teachers create connections, build alliances, and seek to disrupt the hegemonic endeavor of standardized testing. I consider several different frameworks drawing from educational reform theory and social movement theory to examine these issues, and I draw from theoretical concepts within post-structuralism and material feminism to explore and describe the interactions between teachers and social movements in this context. In this literature review, I look at research around educational reform and policy, including critiques of testing and accountability policies. Then I examine the connections between educational reform theories and social movement theories. I conclude with a description

of the theoretical lenses framing this study, including the post-structuralist concept of the rhizome.

Review of Research and Scholarship that Informs the Study

       Research on Testing and Assessment Policy. Educational reform policies such as No Child Left Behind (2001) and Race to The Top (2009) led to increased accountability mandates, affecting multiple levels ranging from school districts to individual teachers. 'Data-driven' practices serve as the primary mechanisms for these accountability mandates, as educators are tasked with gathering assessment data and using that data to inform instructional decisions. School administrators depend on data for teacher evaluations and managerial and operations decisions such as school funding. While data-driven practices themselves are nothing new, No Child Left Behind and Race to The Top brought an increased focus on accountability decisions based on data. As Mike Rose (2011) explains, "The fundamental mechanism of NCLB has been an accountability system of high-stakes standardized tests of the core subjects, mathematics and reading. How schools and districts perform on the tests has big consequences and can ultimately lead to sanctions, withholding of federal funding, and a change in leadership," (p. 34). Rose discusses how current reform efforts distort and devalue the type of quality teaching and learning that exist in many school settings, and he argues that current reform efforts are driven primarily by economic forces, rather than a true focus on learning.

       Diane Ravitch, a professor at New York University and one of the original advisors to the development of NCLB, has since spoken out about the consequences of NCLB. Ravitch (2013) describes the myths which paved the way for privatization of public education, and which largely centered on narratives of school failure. "NCLB

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made accountability the nation's education policy…to measure and punish," she writes, and explains that "The entire edifice of No Child Left Behind, and its successor, Race to the Top, sits on the shaky foundation of standardized testing. The tests label, rank, and grade students, teachers, principals, and schools. They are ubiquitous…The tests turn out to be a fairly reliable measure of advantage and disadvantage, of family income and education," (Ravitch, 2013, p. 263). She argues that the increase of high-stakes standardized testing does not result in student performance gains, and actually serves as a method to strip local public control of schools and open the door for private companies to enter the public "market" of education. Both Rose and Ravitch highlight the economic forces behind the more public rhetoric and rationale for these policies, and note that high-stakes tests do more than simply measure student learning, and the implications are important and complex.

With an increase in required testing, an increase in funding was necessary to administer testing, and that funding came from the federal government. In 2009, President Barack Obama created a new federal funding program to stimulate an economic recovery during the recession. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided $4.35 billion for states to develop statewide standards and assessment systems, and statewide data systems to collect and track student data. In order to compete for these funds in the following years, states had to adopt national standards. This coincided with the development of the Common Core Standards, which are educational standards that define what students in pre-K through 12th grade should know, and be able to do, in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics. The Common Core Standards are intended to be consistent standards with clearly defined goals. These standards were

developed by consortium of groups beginning in 2009, who all received substantial funding from the Gates Foundation. These groups included the National Governors Association (NGA), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and Achieve (governors/business leaders), who received a combined $108 million dollars in funding from the Gates Foundation. Along with the development and adoption of the standards came the development of standardized tests to measure performance on those standards.

Ethical Assessment. Educational researchers have long cautioned against the unintended consequences arising from an overreliance on data. James Popham (1999) describes how high-stakes tests often aren't intended for what they're being used for, namely the decisions being made based upon particular tests. He also notes a lack of assessment literacy among teachers, administrators, and policymakers making decisions with assessment data. Linn (2005) highlights the problems hidden within the No Child Left Behind accountability system, such as inconsistent measurement standards and problematic achievement targets. While Linn applauds the focus on achievement for all segments of the population, he argues that the expectations are unrealistically high for student achievement. He mentions that proficiency definitions vary from state to state, so there's no telling what "proficiency" actually means.

Confrey (2008) offers additional critiques concerning the ethics of testing, writing that "NCLB has compressed elements of all three testing traditions into one law…When multiple uses of testing are combined, conflicts, trade-offs, and tensions are likely to arise. This is especially true when these different uses evolve from different perspectives on equity, validity, and fairness," (p. 43). Mandinach (2008) calls for revisiting the classic validity arguments of Cronbach (1976) and Messick (1989), which state "validity

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resides more in test score interpretation than test construction" (p. 13). The concept of validity has evolved over the years and plays an important role in the utilization of high-stakes testing, accountability systems, and data-driven decision-making. The current view of validity is defined as the appropriateness or trustworthiness of the uses and interpretations of test scores (Welner, 2013). This definition is especially important in terms of high-stakes testing because it addresses the uses of test scores, not only the interpretations. What exactly is being tested, what do the results mean, and what action will we take based on these results? These are important questions that educators and policymakers now face when looking at the utility and validity of assessment measures. While some research points to negative impacts regarding high-stakes testing practices, researchers continue to press for more effective and useful assessment systems and data-driven decision-making methods (Mandinach, 2008).

Social Movement Theory and Educational Reform. Jeannie Oakes' (1992) theory of educational reform references three distinct dimensions of change that contribute to reform. These include the technical realm, or the structures, strategies, and knowledge that contribute to reform, and is often the dimension most emphasized during reform. Oakes also highlights the political realm, or relations between stakeholders, as well as the normative or ideological realm, where values and beliefs can either impede or initiate reform. Oakes argues that all three dimensions need attention for school reform to create lasting and meaningful change. In the context of high-stakes testing and accountability policies, much attention has been focused on the technical realm as policymakers have sought to impact the educational system by 'raising the bar' through testing mandates. In response to growing concerns over the ethics and efficacy of high-

stakes testing and accountability policies, educators have expressed their personal and professional beliefs around these practices in a variety of avenues, tapping into other dimensions referenced by Oakes (1992). Oakes' theory of educational reform provides multiple conceptual lenses to look at the complexities of different structures, strategies, practices and relationships associated with school change.

Anyon (2005) presents a theoretical framework for understanding social activism within public education, which can inform educational policy and drive reforms that serve the needs of all students and their families and communities. Calling for direct participation in social activism in education, she argues that many of the conditions necessary for successful social organizing already exist within the context of public education. She argues that meaningful change within education cannot occur merely at the technical level with school-based policies, but must tap into broader social and political strategies to fully address the issues that contribute to inequity within education. As Anyon (2005) notes, "My reading of U.S. history tells me that social movements have been the most efficacious—if not the only—method of obtaining public policies that offer basic civil and economic rights to African Americans, Latinos, the White working class, and women, for example…Social movements have changed education," (p. 10).

Anyon (2005) highlights three conditions that prompt people to engage in social movement organizing around education. The first condition involves shifts in social conditions and a recognition of opportunities to push against the status quo. This has surfaced as teachers recognize that their work has been curtailed because of policies perceived as ineffective. Teachers and their unions have created pushback to accountability policies that tie teacher evaluations to student test scores. Backed by

scholarly research, they have challenged these policies in classrooms, as well as courts and legislatures (Pullin, 2013). The second condition occurs when a stark contrast occurs between rhetoric and reality, prompting stakeholders to speak out. For example, the ambitious political promises of NCLB have fallen short, as increased testing has not led to increased achievement, leaving many teachers and parents wondering why such attention continues to be spent on the associated testing practices. Finally, Anyon describes how a legitimization of concerns can stimulate further action. As opt-out movements have sprung up around the nation, broader organizing efforts and greater media coverage have contributed to a growing public awareness of the issues. The reauthorization of NCLB in 2015, titled the 'Every Student Succeeds Act' (ESSA), reflected a significant shift in policy by dropping previous funding sanctions based on opt-out rates and granting more discretion to states in terms of accountability requirements (ESSA, 2015).

By building on Anyon's approach, scholars and practitioners can inform policy by playing an active role and engaging in participatory policy development. Fine, Ayala, and Zaal (2012) describe the "generous hijacking of educational policy" by private and corporate interests, through high-stakes testing practices and the guise of philanthropy. They report examples in New York where private money is influencing public education policy, and then provide a solution in the form of participatory policy development. They outline a model in which educational justice can be attained by engaging in a democratized approach to policy development. The model incorporates public science, or critical participatory inquiry, into more traditional policy development. Fine, Ayala, and Zaal (2012) describe an instance in New Jersey in which a community organized against

high-stakes testing requirements that further exacerbated educational inequities. They utilized the model of participatory policy development to conduct strategic research and involved students themselves. Their policy recommendations were met with resistance by state-level administrators, but the process still proved powerful for those who participated and those who continue to benefit from the work.

Drawing from Dewey's ideas around participatory social inquiry and social movement theory, Oakes and Rogers (2007) argue that social movement activism is necessary to enact meaningful and equitable change in education. They refer to this process as "Learning Power," and offer a framework for examining how educators can participate in this work. They reference three key components of this process: Learning about power, or social inquiry about concrete power relations that impact their work; the power of learning, or learning about knowledge production and how knowledge can create change; and learning to be powerful, which refers to participants engaging in direct organizing and collective action. This brings rise to teacher activism, which is referred to as educators working for social justice both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers engaged in activism via the opt-out movement have joined community organizations, produced information for the public around testing and opting out, and engaged in the political process through public testimony, which relate to the elements of "Learning Power."

Post-Structuralism and the Concept of the "Rhizome"

In the Deleuzoguarttarian concept of the rhizome, Deleuze & Guattari (1987) draw contrasts between the tree or root and the rhizome, organic elements of nature which represent very different approaches to being and thought. They describe the

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tree/root as a hierarchical element, while the rhizome represents a more natural, chaotic element. While a tree represents a "system of derivation," with roots, trunk, and leaves bound and connected to each other in a linear, hierarchical fashion (May, 2005), rhizomes represent a much different way of thinking and being. Rhizomes are not bound to any particular order or structure, and may grow and spread unbounded. Western thinking has been historically imagined like the image of a tree, based on hierarchies and categorizations and inhabiting a linear, chronological structure. Deleuze & Guattari (1987) argue for a more disrupted notion of thinking modeled after the rhizome. "Deleuze used the biological notion of a rhizome as a metaphor for multidirectional growth and diverse productivity," (Semetsky, 2008, p. xiii).

The concept of the rhizome provides a compelling way to examine the phenomenon of resistance to high-stakes standardized testing in education, particularly among teachers, and serves as a useful theoretical concept as well. High-stakes standardized testing has primarily been implemented as a top-down mechanism in which schools and teachers are labeled as failing, and heavy-handed reforms are instituted as a result. Resistance to high-stakes testing has grown substantially across the nation, but in a manner similar to rhizomatic growth, with no identifiable beginning or end, deterritorialized as it spreads in spurts and leaps, with different participants engaging in resistance for different reasons While these differences may seem to dilute the potential power of a more unified and cohesive movement, they can in fact produce more expansive networks of agentic capacity. They can also offer a different lens with which to examine the opt-out movement. Despite differences, similar goals overlap, and the multiplicity of various voices can create change. This study maps a particular

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instantiation of the opt-out movement, contributing to a better understanding of the overall contribution of social movement organizing to changes in educational policy.

Subjectivity. The post-structuralist concept of the rhizome can inform how we consider subjectivity in qualitative research. In fact, "thought modeled on the rhizome links unexpected texts and events to make surprising new connections and unpredictable, unreplicable, insights. Such analysis is also concerned with the dissolution of the transcendental and unitary rational subject, of he who "knows," (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p. 83). Deliberate intentionality on the part of an acting subject loses its definitive power, and we see more emergent agency rising from the network of connections involved. While this study examines testing and the opt-out movement from the vantage point of teachers, I attempted to look beyond individualistic notions of identity.

"We need a theory of the relationship between experience, social power, and resistance…" Weedon writes (1987, p. 8). She goes on to describe how "Theory…must be able to recognize and account for competing subjective realities and demonstrate the social interests on behalf of which they work. THIS involves understanding how particular social structures and processes created the conditions of existence which are at one and the same both material and discursive" (ibid). In this sense, post-structuralism offers a way to look at the dynamic interactions occurring between people and policies within educational systems. Teachers inhabit particular subject positions as employees and professionals, and they inhabit personal positions also. These subjectivities are not necessarily stemming from within teachers as individuals, but are being produced by the social and political systems they exist within.

Theoretical Framework: Application to Present Study

Through the theoretical frameworks of Oakes & Rogers (2007) and Deleuze & Guattari (1987), I'll look at the processes by which teachers engage in activism and resistance to high-stakes testing, and how personal and professional subjectivities influence their involvement in such activities. I draw from education reform theory and social movement theory in education (Oakes, 1992; Anyon, 2005; Oakes & Rogers, 2007) to explore the different factors that influence teacher activism and engagement in the opt-out movement, specifically the "Learning Power" framework developed by Oakes & Rogers. I frame the project with a post-structuralism lens, utilizing the Deleuzoguattarian concept of the rhizome (1987), to illustrate the complex of this social movement and teachers' involvement.

Analytic Framework. I apply post-structuralist perspectives to explore teacher activism and the dynamic interactions that have contributed to this movement. I specifically apply the Deleuzoguattarian (1987) concept of the rhizome in an analysis of teacher resistance to high-stakes testing practices and policies, and how the opt-out movement operates, and the different forces involved. These concepts address notions of multiplicity, connection, and the complex interactions that give rise to activism and resistance. This study maps the connections and interactions between various factors that drive teacher activism and educational reform, in the current context of the opt-out movement.

The concept of the rhizome illustrates several important characteristics that apply to this study, including notions of power operating as heterogeneous, centerless networks of points where new connections are created, resulting in significant changes and

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unpredictable growth. Semetsky (2008) notes that the rhizome represents "movements in diverse directions instead of a single path, multiplying its own lines and establishing the plurality of unpredictable connections in the open-ended smooth space of its growth," (p. xv). The rhizome also represents a shift away from the conception of a stable subject as teacher or parent, and toward more multiplicitous considerations of subjectivity, allowing for an exploration of the magnitudes and dimensions of experience which may contribute to teachers' engagement in activism. These experiences serve as multiple entry points for the ways teachers engage in activism while shifting between perspectives as practicing teachers, knowledgeable professionals, parents of children, and members of networked social communities. The post-structuralist concept of the rhizome addresses matters of discourse, language, and knowledge, by emphasizing complex networks of lateral connections rather than hierarchical structures. Through survey and interview questions, I examine how activism emerged among teachers by looking at communications and messaging between teachers, administrators, and parents, as well as reviewing policy shifts resulting from activism and organizing.

The rhizome can be applied to study processes within education, for example de Freitas (2012) considers social interactions in schools as "complex rhizomatic processes" (p. 588). This study takes up an analysis of how the opt-out movement emerged in Oregon, and the different forces involved that produced policy change. I consider how standardized testing and accountability policies, and even the tests themselves, produced certain personal and professional experiences for teachers and parents. Some teachers were motivated to become more involved in teacher activism, and participation in activism around standardized testing then produced different effects in terms of policy

changes. This study looks at the various factors and forces that have influenced teacher

activism in the opt-out movement and within public education at large. The following

table presents a summation of the questions, theoretical framings, and data sources used

in this analysis.

Table 1

Research Questions and Theoretical Framework

Research Questions	Theoretical Framing	Data Sources/ Unit of Analysis
1. How and why do teachers engage in activism and resistance to high-stakes testing? a. What types of conditions and experiences motivate teachers to engage in activism? b. How do teachers build relational power, produce knowledge, and engage in collective action through participation in the opt-out movement?	**-Rhizome** (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) **-Learning Power** (Oakes & Rogers, 2007)	**Policy documents related to HB 2655:** State-level analysis of witness testimony **Online teacher survey:** Analysis of local teachers' responses **Teacher interviews:** Analysis of local teachers' responses
2. How do personal and professional subjectivities influence teacher activism? a. How do teachers' professional roles influence their participation in activism around education? b. How does being a parent influence teachers' participation in activism around education?	**-Rhizome** (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)	

Summary

   This study examines teacher activism and the opt-out movement in Oregon,

drawing from research on testing and assessment, social movement and educational

reform theory, and post-structuralist theory. At this time, a generation of students have

passed through their K-12 education experiencing the high-stakes testing policies that were implemented in the early 2000s. These policies have resulted in resistance around the nation among many stakeholders, from teachers, parents, and students to scholars within the field of education research. This resistance has in turn led to policy changes in testing at federal, state, and local levels. Research on testing and assessment policy demonstrates that accountability policies and high-stakes testing can have unintended consequences, and scholars emphasize the importance of validity and making appropriate decisions with test data. Social movement and education reform theory indicate that activism in education can create changes within the system, and the opt-out movement around high-stakes testing is a current example. This study explores teachers' participation in activism and the opt-out movement, and applies the post-structuralist concept of the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to notions of teacher subjectivity.

III: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study takes up the 'Concept as Method' approach articulated by Lenz Taguchi & St. Pierre (2017), in which inquiry "begins with a concept instead of a pre-existing methodology," (p. 646). Beginning this study by considering the concept of the rhizome helped guide considerations of heterogeneous connections and multiple ways that participants were positioned in this work. Taking up this type of research helped illuminate how teachers' personal and professional subjectivities are produced in multiple and interrelated ways. Assemblages of relations can develop in unpredictable ways around different actions and events, and engaging in methodology through the concept of the rhizome allowed a deeper look at policy and resistance in action.

Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions

The epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning this study are grounded in qualitative research traditions, including critical qualitative and post-structuralist approaches. The critical approach signifies that "meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world…There are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and a particular context," (Merriam, 2002). Also, a critical qualitative approach looks at the social and political aspects of a situation and how individuals construct reality given these broader factors. As teachers engage in activism, they actively create knowledge related to the broader factors that influence the current context of high-stakes

testing and accountability practices, as well as inhabit different personal and professional subject positions which are shaped by these same broader factors.

Post-structuralist theories offer different ways of considering epistemological and ontological concerns about language, discourse, and subjectivity. Thinking with the Deleuzoguattarian concept of the rhizome allowed me to approach the opt-out movement as a mapping or assemblage, with individuals positioned as teachers, parents, mentors, colleagues, and friends, while experiencing their work within systems of public education where policies exist and shift. Locating the site of my research in this particular context, place, and time, which corresponded with the statewide implementation of opt-out policy, allowed me to examine how different forces such as activism and resistance were produced within this and as part of the assemblage.

Research Design. This qualitative research study looks at complex interactions among teachers' personal and political beliefs and actions, and those interactions are shaped by social forces occurring in a particular place and time. To explore those complexities in more detail, I focused on the opt-out movement in the state of Oregon, looking at the phenomenon of this particular instantiation of resistance to high-stakes testing. I specifically focused on practicing teachers who have participated in activism around the opt-out movement and more general educational issues. I seek to examine descriptive and explanatory questions, rather than causative questions, so a qualitative approach is appropriate for this project. I focused this study on teachers in a close geographic area, and looked at teacher participation in opt-out activism across three neighboring districts. These particular districts represent different levels of opt-out participation by students, and district administration has responded to testing differently

as well, with one of these school districts publicly opposing the statewide testing system. Because I'm interested in the role of teachers' subjectivity in teacher activism, I purposefully recruited teachers who are also parents, in order to look at how their personal and professional roles overlap and are products of the assemblage.

Study Participants. This study included an initial sample size of 32 practicing K-12 public school teachers who completed an online survey, followed by in-depth interviews with seven teachers who completed the survey. I recruited participants from three neighboring suburban districts in Oregon, selected due to proximity, convenience, and relevance to the study parameters. For the survey, I recruited Oregon public school teachers currently teaching in those three districts, including teachers who were also parents, and who participated in some form of activism related to the opt-out movement or general educational issues in the past few years. "Activism" in this sense refers to a number of activities that align with Oakes' and Roger's (2007) framework of learning power. These activities can include direct action, such as opting one's children out of testing or providing testimony to legislators, or more indirect actions such as attending community meetings and informational talks about the opt-out movement. For the interviews, I solicited voluntary participation from survey respondents, prioritizing teachers with children in grades 3-8 and 11 (testing grades) who opted their children out of tests or otherwise participated in activism. Inclusion criteria for this study consisted of the following: English-speaking K-12 teachers currently working in three selected districts, including all races/ethnicities and all genders. In terms of screening for eligibility to participate in the study, subjects self-reported via survey questions that

captured demographic data, including employment status. No compensation was offered to study participants.

Recruitment. I recruited current teachers as participants for the online survey via social media, email, personal networks, and outreach to local community organizations. All recruitment was conducted through public and existing contacts and platforms. Recruitment materials included a written letter for email and social media distribution, and a verbal script for phone calls or in-person recruitment. I recruited interview participants from the subject pool who completed surveys, by including a screen at the end of the survey where interested participants could indicate their interest in being interviewed. They were prompted to provide contact information in that screen, and I followed up with them to schedule an in-person interview. My initial recruitment effort included posting a public and shareable survey link to my personal Facebook page, and from there the link was shared approximately twenty times by personal friends and mutual contacts. I also shared the recruitment materials with local friends and colleagues who worked in public education. Once I started conducting interviews, some teachers I interviewed shared the survey with their colleagues as well, and more study participants joined via these professional referrals. The survey responses were screened for participants who were teaching in the three neighboring Oregon districts.

Data Collection and Management. In this study, I collected data from multiple sources to explore the dynamics around teacher activism in relation to standardized testing, including policy documents, survey responses, and interviews with teachers. I collected and reviewed policy documents related to H.B. 2655, Oregon's opt-out legislation, which included public testimony related to the policy. This testimony was

provided over the course of several months, from February to June 2015. I collected two

primary forms of data locally--survey responses and interviews, which addressed teacher

participation in activism in response to standardized testing. I administered a survey to

practicing teachers in order to map their participation in the opt-out movement. For the

survey, I recruited Oregon public school teachers, especially those who participated in

some form of activism related to the opt-out movement in the past few years. "Activism"

in this sense refers to a number of activities that align with Oakes' and Roger's (2007)

framework of learning power. I also sought to recruit teachers who were parents of

school-aged children. The survey elicited information about various activities teachers

participated in, both in their roles as teachers and as parents. These activities aligned with

elements of the 'learning power' framework, and range from building relationships and

connections, to knowledge production and direct action. Examples of such activities

include opting one's children out of testing or providing testimony to legislators, or other

activities such as attending community meetings and informational talks about the opt-

out movement.

Participants completed one online survey, administered through the Qualtrics

platform, which took approximately 10-20 minutes. Through a series of multiple-choice

and short-answer questions, I captured the circumstances and reasons for participation in

the opt-out movement, as well as the various strategies teachers have used while

engaging in resistance to standardized tests. Survey questions also collected demographic

data to depict general characteristics of the participants in this context. The survey

included a general pool of questions for everyone, then different questions for sub-sets of

the participants (parents and non-parents). See Appendix B for the questions included in the online survey.

For the interviews, I solicited voluntary participation from survey respondents, prioritizing teachers with children in grades 3-8 (testing grades) who opted their children out of tests or otherwise participated in activism. I conducted semi-structured interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), and I asked more in-depth questions around teachers' experiences with testing and the opt-out movement. I conducted one interview with each participant, and the interviews lasted approximately 20-40 minutes. See Appendix C for the Interview protocol. I audio recorded the interviews with the Audacity software program, for transcription purposes only, and also took hand-written notes during the interview. No follow-up occurred beyond the survey and one interview with select participants. This study took place in the state of Oregon, which provided a unique opportunity to study the opt-out movement, as Oregon recently passed legislation granting parents the right to opt out their children from testing.

Data considerations. This project required human subjects approval as it involved human participants. The researcher collected signed consent forms from all participants. Data was made anonymous by assigning random numeric IDs to all participants, who were then referred to by ID number only. The survey was administered online through Qualtrics, and was composed of multiple-choice and short-answer questions related to teacher demographic data and participation in the opt-out movement. I compiled the responses into a spreadsheet, which were preserved as .xls files. The in-depth interviews were recorded using Audacity audio recording software and preserved as .wav files, and then transcribed into text files. Text data was generated as .doc files, and then preserved

as .rtf files. Data was stored primarily on an external hard drive stored in the researcher's home office, and data was encrypted. This data was also backed up on a secure server hosted by the university. Metadata information included when and where each piece of data was collected, along with a description of the sample. For data that were reformatted, such as audio files transcribed into text, I documented the original data collection information as well as the reformatting data (date/time, storage location, etc.).

Data Analysis

The Deleuzoguattarian notion of rhizomatic growth applies not only to teacher activism and subjectivity, but also to the way in which I engaged in this research, allowing for a complex interrogation of the topic utilizing multiple modes of data collection and analysis and challenging traditional ideas about research serving as merely interpretation and documentation. In this project I attempted to "disrupt the centering compulsion of traditional qualitative research," as described by Jackson and Mazzei (2011, p. viii), in which their research accomplishes this by "cutting into the center, opening up to see what newness might be incited." Given the rhizomatic characteristics of unpredictable growth, rhizomatic analysis provides a useful approach for this project and allowed for a non-linear examination of the topic. In this study, I attempted to capture data through more formal avenues of scholarly research, such as surveys, interviews, and policy analysis. I supplemented the primary data with more informal sources of data, such as observations and conversations in my own role as a parent/teacher that emerged in the doing of the research. I captured these bits of data through participant observations and memos. This provided a way to circle around the data, returning to consider different angles and perspectives of the data, thus providing a fresh perspective on the topic.

"Within the rhizome, new connections are constantly being made, and as new connections are forged, the rhizome changes. Thus, a rhizome is always in a state of flux, constantly becoming different," (Strom, 2015, p. 2). A rhizomatic framework in this case allows for a non-linear examination of the issue. I conducted multiple waves of data analysis, including a qualitative review of policy documents and preliminary empirical analyses of the surveys. I initially looked at policy documents related to H.B. 2655, Oregon's opt-out bill passed in 2015, which included the text of the legislation and its associated revisions, vote counts, and public testimony documents, and analyzed the text to determine participants and the types of messaging they utilized. These documents provided insight into who was involved in the opt-out movement in Oregon, and what factors motivated them to participate. This information shaped the development of the survey and interview questions. The surveys provided descriptive data regarding conditions and reasons for participating in activism, as well as demographic data regarding participants. Demographic data included grade level taught, years of experience teaching, as well as data about gender, race, and family background, such as number of children. Then I turned to the in-depth interviews, and conducted thematic coding related to the 'Learning Power' framework (Oakes & Rogers, 2007), looking at which phases of 'learning power' teachers engaged in and which strategies they employed in their activism. I then conducted theoretical analyses of the interviews to explore the interaction between teachers' personal and professional subjectivities and their participation in the opt-out movement. This analysis incorporated different conceptual lenses: including both critical qualitative theories about education reform and the post-structuralist concept of the rhizome.

Role of the Researcher

As I consider my role as researcher in this study, I recognize that this involves a look beyond traditional modes of representation while I examine multiple layers of voice and subjectivity. My own experiences as teacher, parent, and assessment developer influence my understanding of the issue from multiple vantage points, so I draw from both my personal experience and scholarly research as I examine this topic. When I share insights and findings from my research, I can't merely report these findings as objective facts derived from external research. How I represent the findings depends on how I derive the findings, and the multiplicitous nature of this project has challenged the whole process. Issues of voice are complicated as the identities of both researcher and subject(s) merge and overlap, in an assemblage of sorts, and how I choose to share this knowledge entails a closer look at the impacts and interactions between subjects, participants, and educational policy. While certain types of data, such as interviews, often constitute "real" data, I also allowed for my own experiences and personal conversations and discussions to influence my understanding of the topic. As a researcher, I noted the emergence of my own subjective musings and how that positionality may impact my view of a particular educational concern. I incorporated my personal experiences into the mix of inquiry, data, and analysis, as I embrace my own entanglement with personal and collective notions of agentic power. This process of questioning the question by tending to the experiences allowed for a rich understanding of the agentic forces at work in the resistance movement, as well as a greater awareness of my role and potential as researcher/educator/parent.

In this project, I drew from my broad range of personal and professional experiences and incorporate that into the analysis. While recognizing the broader social and historical context of high-stakes testing, I draw from my multiple identities as a teacher, test developer, and parent to think through these issues, recognizing that my experiences transverse multiple territories in the educational field. As a classroom teacher in a large, urban school district, I witnessed the devastating impacts of high-stakes testing, from involuntary teacher transfers to questionable teacher evaluation practices. As a test developer, I keenly understand the cost and complexity of quality assessment design as well as the critical need to align effective measures with appropriate decisions. As a parent, I've observed an increased focus on testing with my own children, as more instructional time and resources are devoted to test preparation and administration. My intersecting subject positions and experiences have provided me with a comprehensive view of the effects of high-stakes testing, which point toward larger issues such as the privatization of public education, increasing federal control, and an erosion of the teaching profession (Linn, 2005; Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012; Ravitch, 2013; Au, 2016). My subjectivity as a researcher blends with that of a participant, as I seek to include and represent understandings derived from personal and professional experiences. I write about the confluence of personal motivations and actions, along with more traditional objective concerns such as policy changes and testing practices, merging the various voices in a comprehensible narrative describing the phenomenon of high-stakes testing resistance and teachers' decisions to engage in that resistance.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions of the study: Data collection methods represent accurate and honest accounts of teacher experiences. Some of the data was collected through anonymous online surveys, and thus there was no way to verify identity or accuracy in responses. Limitations of the study: This study represents data bound by place and time and reflecting particular experiences and social and political conditions, and this study is not necessarily generalizable or replicable. The data was collected by convenience sampling methods, so the subject pool was limited by teacher availability and interest; and may represent a particular niche of teaching force. The opt-out movement exists in different formations within a national context and this study focused on data from Oregon, so the results should be interpreted with Oregon's particular demographics in mind. While the subject pool was limited, I collected copious amounts of data, too much to adequately analyze and present, so I had to make choices in terms of which data is described here. These choices amounted to pruning, both what to include and how to display. Some categories were collapsed for efficiency and some questions were left behind. As such, much more data exists to explore, which is not represented in this study.

IV: RESULTS

In preceding chapters, I outlined the scope and background of the opt-out movement—the accountability policies that prompted resistance, the emergence of the opt-out movement as resistance, and the theoretical lenses that I take up to examine this movement. In this section, I describe the results from this study. This chapter is organized chronologically as well as conceptually, in that I begin by describing my first inquiries into this topic, and then share the results of more focused research that emerged from my initial inquiries. Guided by the theoretical perspectives of Learning Power (Oakes & Rogers, 2007) and the post-structuralist concept of the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), I incorporated these concepts into the survey and interview protocol design, then analyzed the data by looking for emergent themes related to these concepts. Initial analysis was followed by more refined analysis, in which I looked at more specific examples of the emergent themes. Multiple sources of data informed this research design and analysis.

Data Sources and Findings. Oregon's HB 2655 offered an entry point into this inquiry, as this policy was passed and implemented during the period in which I began this research study., which spanned from 2014 to 2017. I initially began exploring this legislation as a potential source of data and after some preliminary analysis, I focused more in-depth on specific, local examples of teacher activism related to standardized testing. This analytical approach was shaped by the theoretical concept of the rhizome, which Deleuze & Guattari (1987) describe as having "neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills," (p. 21). In this sense, I entered into this research topic by first looking at policy, then branched into the

world of teachers as they grappled with standardized testing and the implementation of the opt-out policy. Much media reporting and scholarly research around the opt-out movement emphasized parents' roles, and I initially thought about focusing on parents as the primary unit of analysis. Looking through policy documents turned up an interesting facet, however, in that much of the public testimony around the opt-out legislation came from parents who were also teachers. Based on this preliminary data analysis, I refined data collection efforts to capture the experiences of teachers, who might also be parents, and their perceptions and actions around SBAC testing and Oregon's opt-out movement by administering a survey and conducting interviews. This enabled me to explore the convergence of standardized testing, the opt-out movement, and the work of teachers as they experience these points of contact. In this section, I begin by presenting findings from the initial policy analysis, then I present findings from survey results and interviews.

Oregon's Opt-Out Policy

Teachers played an integral role in the opt-out movement in Oregon, operating in multiple roles as teachers and parents, testifying in the legislature, and raising public awareness around these policies. H.B. 2655 was first introduced in Oregon's House of Representatives in February 2015, and then advanced to state Senate consideration, with committee revisions, public testimony, policy input, and media coverage influencing the eventual passage of the bill. Many different stakeholders voiced their opinions about this legislation, including both individuals and organizations. Parents, teachers, and school administrators spoke out as well, and teachers' unions and community organizations provided collective statements in support of the legislation. Before implementation of

H.B. 2655, parents were only allowed to opt-out their children from state standardized testing to accommodate a disability or because of religious reasons. H.B. 2655 sought to make the opt-out process more transparent and accessible to all families, and to grant parents the right to opt-out their children for any reason, not just student disability or religious reasons.

Analysis of Witness Testimony. I looked at witness testimony to determine who was participating in direct activism around this policy and why. In an analysis of policy documents related to HB 2655, I found that much witness testimony came from teachers themselves, who also invoked their role as parents, (Oregon H.B. 2655, 2015). Teachers noted both their professional concerns around testing and their personal concerns around their own children's impact from the assessments, and combined these perspectives to present compelling testimony to the state legislature, primarily in support of the opt-out legislation.

Figure 1

H.B. 2655 Public Testimony
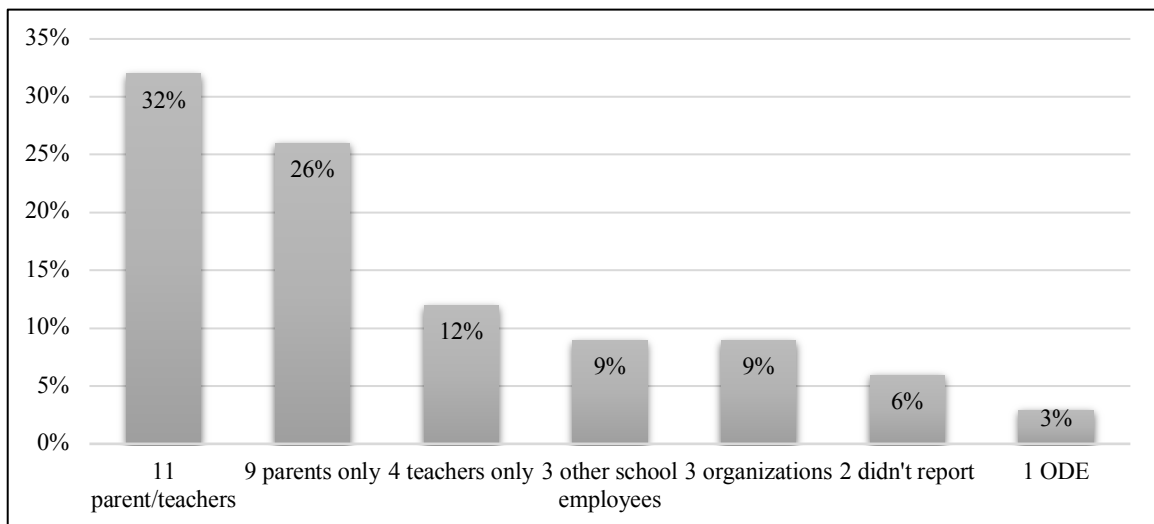
As the legislation wound its way through committees and public hearings, several themes emerged from the messages and testimony provided by the public. Many teachers submitted letters in support of the opt-out legislation and traveled to the state capitol to speak in person. They often invoked both personal and professional concerns for speaking in favor of the opt-out legislation. In the personal realm, teachers described their own children's difficulties with the tests, and their frustrations as parents around an 'opaque' testing process. One teacher shared:

> As a parent, I know that no standardized test results can ever indicate my son's true college and career readiness… As a teacher, I have seen standardized tests punish our most vulnerable students. Due to these tests, I have seen them cry, give up, or feel defeated. I am a well-informed parent because I am a teacher. (Teacher/Parent 1)

Teachers submitting testimony spoke about their decisions to opt-out their own children from testing, and how they utilized different networks to communicate about the issue. Another teacher shared the sentiment that opting-out was important for their own son, as well as for all students, describing how,

> After serious deliberation, we have chosen to opt-out our son from SBAC testing this year. It is time for Oregon to defend the rights of educators, parents and students to ensure that everyone is informed about all of the issues related to standardized testing and the choices they have the freedom to make. (Teacher/Parent 2)

Teachers called upon their professional expertise and classroom experience to provide further support for their views. One teacher cited their professional expertise around assessment as support for opting out, and said,

> As an educator, I am well informed of the benefits and costs associated with high stakes standardized testing. I understand exactly how this data is utilized by the district and what amount of class time is needed to prepare for this assessment. For most parents, this is not transparent…They do not know what is on the test or what skills their child is being evaluated on. We need to provide all of this information to parents and families so that they can make educated decisions on behalf of their children. It is because of my knowledge as an educator that my husband and I have chosen to opt out our own children. (Teacher/Parent 3)

Teachers were often bound by professional requirements to administer the tests, so they participated in activism and organizing in other channels, such as personal networks. At times, they acknowledged the professional pressure they were under to support the tests. One teacher mentioned this tension specifically, and said,

> As a parent and a teacher, I found myself in a nearly impossible situation, too. I knew I had the right to opt my son out of the testing and, as a teacher, I knew the testing would do him no good. But I also knew that a battle with my son's school district was a battle with my bosses. Ultimately, I chose to opt him out, despite the fact that it put me and my employers in a tight spot. (Teacher/Parent 4)

In their testimony, the teachers emphasized that they were concerned about testing because it took away from their children's learning opportunities and added pressure to their school experiences. In addition, the teachers saw students in their classrooms confronting similar challenges. The teachers also noted the impact of testing on different groups of students, for example, more marginalized students experienced more negative consequences from testing policies. They emphasized the importance of evaluating the costs and benefits of testing in terms of time, money and resources. The teachers saw this as a complex space, and intentionally considered different perspectives in support of their views. While multiple groups of stakeholders organized and lobbied legislators to pass this bill, teachers in particular provided strong voices in support of the bill and participated in different avenues of activism as well. Approximately thirty individuals submitted letters or appeared in person during public hearings to share their views about this policy, and of those individuals, 82% supported passage of the opt-out policy. These efforts resulted in shifts in state educational policy, and H.B. 2655, Oregon's opt-out legislation, was passed in June 2015. Reviewing the witness testimony documents showed that teachers played a vital role in opt-out activism, especially teachers who were parents. They shared how their positions as teachers and parents gave them particular awareness about testing, and for the most part supported the opt-out legislation. They utilized their positions to participate in advocacy in different ways, such as communicating with other parents and opting their own children out of testing. This testimony highlighted the critical role teachers played. Given this revelation from my analysis of the witness testimony documents, I determined that I wanted to hear more from the perspective of teachers, as

they were in the trenches so to speak, and provided insight into a particular point of contact between testing practices and policies.

Survey and Interview Results For the survey and interviews, I focused on the classroom perspective and collected data from teachers in a close geographic region within Oregon. Rather than just targeting opt-out activism, I recruited teachers in general and invited their thoughts about standardized testing, activism, and the opt-out movement. I recruited teachers who were also parents, to capture the interconnected experiences that influenced their perceptions and involvement in activism. First, I present general demographic data from survey respondents, including personal, professional, and political profiles, and then I expand into the various lines of inquiry I pursued, such as teachers' responses to standardized testing, parental status, and engagement in activism.

Survey Respondents. Teachers who responded to the survey represented a fairly homogenous group in terms of race, gender, income, and education, reflective of the teacher pool in Oregon. For this survey, almost 88% of the 32 survey respondents were White, with only a few respondents identifying as American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African-American, and Hispanic/Latino/a. These statistics also mirror the broader community, in which 87% of the community is White (census.gov, 2017), and the state's teaching force, in which approximately 10% of the state's K-12 teachers are ethnically diverse (Oregon Department of Education, 2018). Regarding gender, 69% of survey respondents were female, 25% were male, and 6% self-identified. The sample represented a fairly privileged group in terms of socioeconomic status and education background, as 85% of respondents reported having a Master's Degree, and 80% of survey respondents reported household incomes of greater than $50,000/year. One

teacher had a doctorate degree in education, and three others were pursuing doctoral studies at the time of the study (9%). Survey respondent demographics aligned closely with the teaching field in general, in which approximately 77% of teachers in the United States are female, and 82% of U.S. teachers are White (Loewus, 2017).

Table 2: *Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents*

	Number[1]	Percent
Age		
25-34 years	7	21.9
35-44 years	12	37.5
45-54 years	10	31.3
Not answered	3	9.4
Gender		
Female	22	68.8
Male	8	25.0
Self-identified	2	6.3
Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native & White	1	3.1
Black or African American & White	2	6.3
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	1	3.1
White	28	87.5
Education		
Some college but no degree	2	6.3
Bachelor's degree	1	3.1
Professional degree or license	1	3.1
Master's degree	27	84.4
Doctoral degree (PhD or EdD)	1	3.1
Average Household Income		
Less than $24,999	3	9.4
$25,000-$49,999	3	9.4
$50,000-$74,999	10	31.3
$75,000-$99,999	8	25.0
$100,000 and greater	8	25.0

[1]$n = 32$

Professional Profile. Survey respondents included many experienced teachers, with 87.5% of respondents reporting 6 or more years of teaching and over half of the

respondents reporting a decade or more of teaching experience. The sample represented

mostly middle/secondary teachers, with over half the group currently working as high

school teachers, as well as 31.3% working as elementary school teachers. More than two-

thirds of the respondents reported working at Title I schools, which are schools that serve

high numbers of students from low-income families and receive federal funding under the

ESEA Act.

Table 3: *Professional Profile of Respondents*

	Number[1]	Percent
K-12 Teaching Experience		
3-5 years	4	12.5
6-10 years	10	31.3
11-20 years	13	40.6
21 or more years	5	15.6
District		
Bethel SD	6	18.8
Eugene 4J SD	23	71.9
Springfield SD	3	9.4
Title I Status of Current School		
No	8	25.0
Yes	22	68.8
Not Sure	2	6.3
Current Grade Level		
Grades K-5 (Elementary)	10	31.3
Grades 6-12 (Mid/Second)	22	68.8
Grades 6-12	*4*	*12.5*
Grades 9-12	*18*	*56.2*

[1]$n = 32$

Political Profile. This group of teachers reported a high level of political

engagement, as evidenced by participation in both voting and general activism, as well as

knowledge of political issues such as Oregon's opt-out legislation. Most respondents

(97%) voted during the last major election year (2016), and 69% of respondents

identified as Democrats, with the remaining a mix of Independent, Republican, Non-Affiliated, and other. This indicates a progressive leaning group, similar to the broader community in which registered Democrat voters represent the largest group of voters at 44%, with Republican voters trailing at 26% (Whitol, 2016).

Table 4: *Political Engagement Profile of Respondents*

	Number[1]	Percent
<u>Party Affiliation</u>		
Democratic	22	68.8
Republican	1	3.1
Independent	2	6.3
Non-Affiliated	6	18.8
Other	1	3.1
<u>Voted in Last Election</u>		
No	1	3.1
Yes	31	96.9
<u>Knowledge and Activism Regarding Oregon HB 2655</u>		
Aware of legislation		
No or not sure	4	12.5
Yes	28	87.5
In favor of legislation		
No or no answer	5	15.6
Yes	27	84.4
Took action around this legislation		
No or no answer	26	81.2
Yes	6	18.8
<u>Participated in Activism about Other Public Education Issues</u>		
No	9	28.1
Yes	23	71.9

[1]$n = 32$

Respondents were generally politically active, with 72% of teachers participating in activism around general public education issues. While most teachers were both aware and supportive of H.B. 2655 (88% and 85% respectively), only 18.8% of respondents engaged in specific activism related to this legislation.

Key Findings

Several themes emerged from teachers' insights about testing and the opt-out movement, captured through additional survey questions and interviews. I interviewed seven teachers who took the survey, all of whom were parents of school-aged children, but not necessarily children in the tested grades (3-8, 11). Interview participants included one elementary school teacher, two middle school teachers, and four high school teachers. Of these participants, three had completed or were pursuing doctoral studies in education. The interviewees discussed their experiences and perceptions about SBAC testing, Oregon's opt-out policy, and their personal and professional involvement in activism. Teachers noted many professional concerns about testing, such as impact on instruction, concern for students, and their sense of professionalism. Parental status also impacted teachers' views about testing and engagement in activism, as they considered their own children's participation in standardized testing. Some teachers engaged in activism around public education issues, and they shared their motivations to get involved in, which were influenced by multiple factors.

Professional Concerns About Testing. Teachers reported many professional concerns about SBAC testing and the impact it had on their work. Survey data showed that teachers held somewhat negative views about SBAC testing on a number of factors, such as the quality of feedback about student learning and teacher effectiveness, and impact on time and resources for instruction. Teachers were somewhat more positive about alignment of testing content with their class curriculum. Elementary school teachers in particular were concerned about the impact of SBAC testing on teaching and learning at their schools. Many teachers questioned how much time and resources were

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spent on testing, and whether any perceived benefits justified that dedication of time and resources. Teachers shared other professional concerns about testing as well, including overall stress for students and concerns about equity and testing.

Figure 2

Teacher Perceptions of SBAC testing
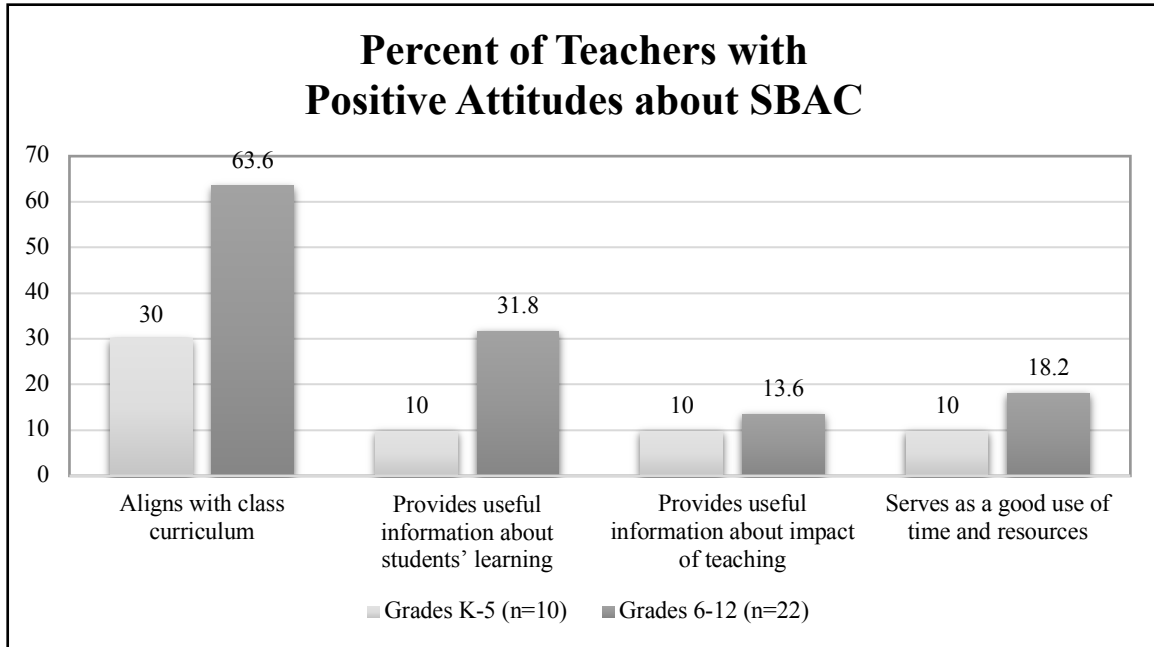
This chart illustrates teachers' perceptions about SBAC testing and compares elementary school teachers' views with middle/high school teachers' views. Elementary teachers demonstrated considerably less favorable perceptions of SBAC testing. The most positive perceived aspect of SBAC testing was alignment of testing content with class curriculum, with 30% of elementary teachers and 63.6% of middle/secondary teachers responding positively. Only 31.8% of middle/secondary teachers found the SBAC tests provided useful information about student learning. They reported even more negative views about the use of time and resources dedicated to SBAC, with only 18.2% responding favorably, and whether SBAC provided useful information about the impact

of teaching on student performance, with only 13.6% responding favorably. Elementary teachers shared more negative perceptions of SBAC in multiple areas, with only 10% responding positively to a) the use of time and resources for SBAC and b) the information provided by SBAC in terms of student learning and impact of teaching.

   Alignment with Curriculum. While teachers reported some alignment with test content and class curriculum, some teachers found SBAC testing still created a stressful environment for teachers due to its impact on regular curriculum and instruction. Testing created a time crunch, and teachers needed to fit regular curriculum into a compressed timeframe. One teacher reported that she lost a month of regular math instruction the previous year due to test preparation and administration. Some teachers also felt that content tested by SBAC represented a narrow slice of the full spectrum of learning, especially for untested subject areas and students receiving special education (SPED). The intense focus on testing preparation resulted in a more narrowed curriculum that represented a reduced breadth of knowledge.

   When I think about the narrow band in which this and so many other tests attempt to assess a child's knowledge and skill set, I get exasperated…fatigued…pissed. Our kids have so much more on which they can demonstrate knowledge and yet we're only interested in knowing how much of the stale curriculum being shoveled into their skulls they've retained. (Teacher X)

   Student Learning and Effective Pedagogy. Teachers recognize the need for assessment and the benefits of assessment, especially the importance of appropriate testing for appropriate purposes. Several teachers explained that they were not opposed to testing in general, they just felt that it must be useful and not compromise learning and

instruction. One teacher said, "In principle, in theory, I'm not opposed to an assessment of students' learning. I'm opposed to assessments that don't inform my instruction, and I'm opposed to assessments that take as much class time as SBAC. It's way too long. And just on that point alone, it's a bad assessment to me."

Some teachers commented on the benefits of standardized tests, in that the tests provided a benchmark for comparison and that the data provided support for accountability. They remarked that standardized tests can hold schools and teachers more accountable for serving their students well, in cases of low standards and support. One teacher explained that teachers should be held to some level of accountability and SBAC testing provided a way to measure that. This teacher mentioned working previously in a rural, high-poverty school district where he noticed a need for some form of accountability to ensure that schools were actually educating students. He noticed general low performance among students who had been passed along despite low skills, "practically illiterate," he said. He believed there should be some form of testing to ensure proper standards, but he mentioned that could be fulfilled by different tests depending on circumstances. He noted that there could be better, shorter assessments that provide the necessary information. Teachers also commented on the importance of content standards and aligned assessments. One teacher said, "Some standardized way of measuring performance is important."

Another teacher said, "I can appreciate the effort to try and come up with a good standards-based assessment. However, I think through the implementation and also what the test looks at and how we get that data, it is not useful at all to informing my instruction and making it better."

Usefulness of Data. Many teachers remarked that SBAC testing doesn't provide useful information on students' learning in a timely manner. One teacher shared, "Scores come back too late to make any informative decisions, and learning to take the test is a unit in itself to be taught. Also, students do not take it seriously, many just click their way through it." Teachers felt that SBAC test scores don't provide useful feedback for teaching. One teacher said that SBAC testing doesn't provide formative feedback or help with daily teaching noting, "It's not used to address skill deficits." The tests don't provide useful information for instruction because teachers receive the results too late, often not until the following year when students have moved on to other classes.

Some teachers explained that testing data and results are not always used appropriately, for example comparing different classes to make decisions or evaluations, based on faulty data. "They don't compare data correctly," a middle school teacher said. "They'll look at eighth grade classes, and they'll say, 'Last year's eighth grade class was here, and then this year's eighth grade class is here.' Like, that is not usable information. They need to compare cohort data, right?" He discussed the need to compare the same group of students to determine growth and learning, rather than comparing two different groups of students.

A high school teacher noted that the cut scores seemed to change from year-to-year. "I think the test was much to do about nothing, ultimately. And if we're setting our own cut scores and I don't know, Washington is setting its own cut scores that's different from us and so is Arkansas, Maine and Minnesota. Pardon me, but what the f*** is the whole purpose of the test? Jesus. It's still not measuring apples and apples," he said.

Concern for Students. In addition to concerns about student learning, teachers were also concerned about the overall effect of testing on students. Many teachers noted that testing caused anxiety and stress for students. One teacher described it as "damaging," and said that testing undermines students' trust with teachers and the school system. Another teacher described testing culture as creating a "barrier" for students, because everyone is worried about it. "Students feel pressure about testing because schools make it a big deal. Even staff members who don't believe in it because it's not effective are still subject to that pressure, and thus contribute to an environment of pressure," the middle school teacher said. He described how different routines are sometimes difficult for middle-school students, and testing was disruptive for students because of that.

Teachers explained how students don't understand the purpose for testing necessarily either. Some teachers reported that students don't always take the testing seriously.

> It's hard to say, no this doesn't count for your grade. It's actually not really useful, but you should do really well! Like we have kids who will just boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, and they just will tank the test on purpose. So then again, how does that make it reliable data or even useful in any way? It just feels like a necessary evil (middle-school teacher).

Other teachers noted that schools are faced with more pressing issues that need attention. One middle school teacher described the impact of recent suicides on school communities. She said,

We have a lot of self-harm and suicidal ideation in middle schools right

now. In our school district, we've had two suicides in the last two weeks

and one of them was at our school last week, a sixth grader. So trying to

focus on community and taking care of our kids, but yet when it comes to

interventions, we only can look at the data, which just frustrates me. Well,

it actually makes me really angry, and it makes a lot of other teachers I

think angry too. Like why are we purposely putting our students in

situations to just add to their anxiety and stress? That's really hard.

Teachers described the various impacts of testing on students and how testing

interacted with their ability to perform their teaching job effectively, and said that testing

was just one of many other critical issues they dealt with regularly.

Professional Expertise and Autonomy. Teachers discussed their support for

quality assessment. Many shared how they don't feel the SBAC standardized tests are

worthwhile uses of time and energy, plus the tests create negative effects such as stress

and anxiety for students and teachers. They emphasized that their views were informed

by professional knowledge and hands-on experience, and that teacher input matters and

should inform policy. Teachers expressed that it was critical to weigh the costs and

benefits of testing for all stakeholders; including students and especially teachers—both

because of their professional knowledge and experience, as well as their close-up view of

the impact of testing on students and instruction.

Professionalism. Teachers also commented on the impact of testing on their sense of

professionalism. Some teachers felt that standardized tests couldn't truly measure

learning like a teacher can. One teacher said,

It also makes me feel like I'm not trusted as a professional, that I can't

assess whether or not I feel like my kids are ready to move on, or are

where they need to be, which I feel like I can do a way better of job that

anyway…than a test, any standardized test, I don't care how good it is,

could ever do.

Other teachers described how their professional expertise was stifled when they

made efforts to inform students about testing and opting-out. A high school teacher

shared how he was reprimanded for answering student questions about the tests and

opting-out, even though he was just responding honestly to student inquiries. Another

teacher described the tension of knowing that he hated the tests, but still feeling under

pressure by the tests, and said, "It's a weird place where it feels like we don't like the test,

but we know we're judged on it."

A middle school teacher said that he didn't know the express purpose of

standardized testing, whether it was to judge schools or teachers, but that the tests don't

benefit teachers or students.

I just feel sometimes tests like that, our reliance on that type of data

devalues the professionalism of teachers. Like we are pushing so hard for

everything to be data driven, which I understand, however, that's only a

snapshot of a kid. We're not allowed to use any other information about

them, like well maybe they did really poorly on this test this day because

of all this other stuff outside of locus of control. (Middle school teacher)

Evaluation and Decision Making. Teachers also described the impact of

standardized testing on evaluation and decision-making, including consequences related

to the SBAC tests. A middle school teacher in a non-tested subject mentioned that his colleagues in tested subjects do feel pressure to prepare students for tests. He explained a chain reaction of associated consequences related to SBAC testing: test scores impact school 'ratings' and their district offers school choice, so ratings impact enrollment. Enrollment impacts funding, which is tied to Average Daily Attendance (ADA) measures, and funding levels then affect staffing decisions. For example, social studies teachers see FTE reductions, while math and language arts teachers don't. School ratings are published in newspapers and can inform public perception about schools, which puts pressure on schools and teachers. One teacher said, "We have become so focused on standardized tests as they determine a school's report card that our students are no longer really learning. Instead they are learning how to take tests!"

Some teachers didn't report any direct sanctions or consequences tied to test scores, while other teachers worked at schools at greater risk of being designated "priority schools," which would bring greater intervention from the state. "Test scores impact teachers, especially at Title and 'priority' schools," a teacher shared, describing his experience teaching at such schools.

I was at a priority school and I remember the fear about what happens if we don't get our scores up. The last two schools I have been at were both Title I schools and the teachers there work so hard and give so much to the students. Could we be better? Absolutely. Are these two amazing staffs? Yes.

Systemic Issues around Testing. I primarily looked at issues directly related to teachers' experiences, and their status as parents. Although I collected additional data

about schools and districts, I didn't include an analysis of the economic status of different schools, even though several teachers mentioned this issue. Several teachers noted middle-class families were more likely to opt-out their children than more economically-marginalized families. These teachers observed that middle-class families were more likely to have access to information, whereas with more marginalized populations "you just do what the teacher tells you." Some teachers also mentioned how racial demographics could impact testing and opt-out rates, especially when underserved communities may have "bought into" the system of accountability and view tests as a way to hold school leadership accountable to serving their students.

Several teachers noted a corporate influence on standardized testing, and specifically mentioned increased costs in terms of money and school resources. Lipman (2013) argues that neoliberal economic interests drive accountability practices as a method of 'coercive control,' and describes a proliferation of 'market-based' practices, capitalism, and entrepreneurial ventures and investments in the assessment 'industry.' These teachers were pursuing doctoral studies and had graduate experience with testing and assessment, which informed their perspective on the bigger picture of standardized testing. They observed that assessment is big business, and wondered how much SBAC testing cost their districts, and who had a vested interest in these tests. This blending of professional knowledge and ethics with their personal values amplified their engagement in activism. One teacher said, "I started finding out how much the test-makers are making and selling these big bundles of testing and making hundreds and thousands or more money by creating all these items." The teacher "became disgusted with that whole

field." Teachers mentioned that the opt-out movement brought some of those economic issues forward in language that people can understand.

Another teacher articulated how her studies gave her deeper insight into the economic aspects of standardized testing, saying,

I think even like, being a doctoral student too, and really understanding that there is, I think, a whole entire industry. I actually feel like the testing industry is a parasite on our kids' energy, life blood, just everything…time. And they're preying upon the students and the teachers and the departments and the schools. And the districts. And they're making money off of us.

She further elaborated on her other perspectives, saying,

So as a parent, 'Okay, I don't want my kids to be tested because I care about their self-esteem.' As a teacher, I don't want my kids to be tested because I care about them and their self-esteem and I also feel like it's taking away from the curriculum that we think is of value for them.

Impact on Time and Resources. One of the most pressing concerns about testing that teachers discussed was the heavy impact on time and school resources. Many teachers felt that SBAC testing was a waste of instructional time and money, and testing didn't provide sufficient information to mitigate that impact. They noted that SBAC testing placed a strain on school resources, such as technology and staff FTE. These conditions affected teachers' ability to perform their job effectively, their sense of professionalism, and also raised concerns about the impact of testing on students.

"There is a huge drain on staff FTE and access to technology during the testing window. It takes too much time—it takes away from instructional time and disrupts school schedules," an elementary school teacher shared. Teachers also noted they were required to spend additional time for training and professional development related to testing administration. Another teacher shared that,

> SBAC assessments dominate our teaching time for WEEKS, not just a few days. We are encouraged to practice with performance tasks prior to the testing window opening, speak with students to really "pump" them up to do their best work, and we are retrained yearly as teachers on HOW to administer the tests (training is time consuming and repetitive).

Teachers described varying levels of the impact of SBAC testing on school schedules, from major disruptions to the whole school to slight changes in technology availability. One high school teacher reported that testing occurred during one week of school, and all classes were shut down and devoted to testing, even though only juniors were required to take SBAC tests. The teacher noted that many students blew off classes, and there was very low attendance that week as it was seen as a waste of time. She works at an alternative school and said that their school serves a vulnerable student population who struggle with attendance anyway, so the testing schedule pushed disengaged students away even more.

"It just disrupts big chunks of time and the students' time. I think it becomes very tense and it really breaks up the routines and the progress of the students in the middle of the school year," explained one teacher. A high school teacher reported two weeks of altered schedules for testing, and that their school made it more like finals week. They

changed the schedule, so students would take it more seriously and to convey a similar sense of pressure as finals. Another teacher said that testing took three days of class time and did interrupt instruction for juniors, but not other students. Teachers also described a confusing test administration and delivery process, although one high school teacher noted how smoother implementation of testing and reframing tests as beneficial for graduation helped garner more support for testing among students and staff. Their school used the SBAC test for graduation requirements, specifically a writing sample, so test preparation was geared toward writing strategies, not the test itself.

Logistical Issues. Many teachers reported problems with technology during testing. "The technology we have does not support the number of students. Technology issues are daily causing some laptops to be pulled from use, dragging out the time needed to test even further," one teacher shared. Others reported logistical problems just based on scheduling technology use, as schedules had to be configured around availability of technology for testing. The drain on time and technology resources persisted as a strong theme throughout teachers' discussions.
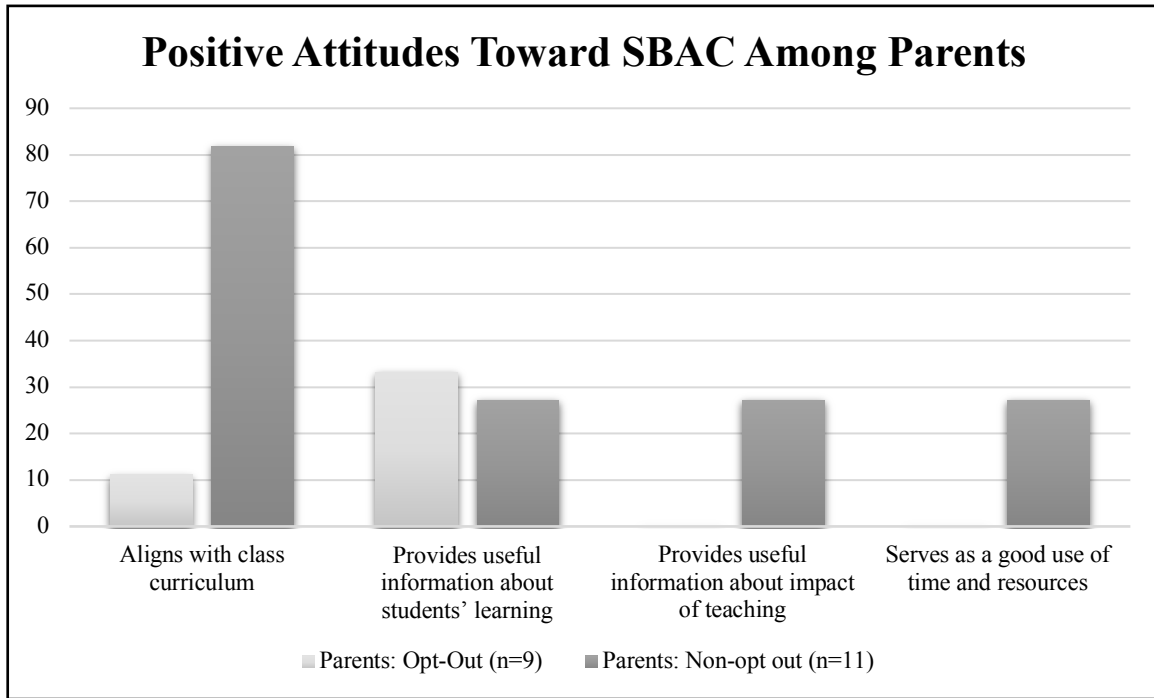
Equity Concerns. Several teachers commented on their concerns about equity and standardized testing. They described class/SES distinctions at different schools, and how privilege at various schools played a role in students opting-out from testing. Teachers observed that schools with more privilege often had higher rates of students opting-out, even though those populations would not likely suffer any consequences from opting out. Meanwhile, lower-SES schools are more dependent on Title I funding and the consequences are more applicable for not making AYP. Teachers also mentioned their concerns about different student populations not being served well by standardized tests,

such as English Language Learner (E.L.L.) students and students with disabilities. One teacher summarized his concerns about SBAC testing and said, "It's not anything that helps me be a better practitioner, it's not anything that helps the students, so why are we doing it?" While it's important to note the differences in opt-out rates among different school populations, it's also important to consider why those differences might exist. Teachers operating from their perspectives as teachers may view the tests as cumbersome and unnecessary, but some students and families from more disadvantaged groups might view testing as a necessary way to hold school leadership responsible for educating their children effectively, especially if they have been underserved in the past.

Parental Status and Personal Concerns About Testing. More than half of survey respondents identified as parents of school-aged children, or 63%. I looked at how many parents opted out their own children from standardized testing. Almost half of the parent respondents opted-out their children from SBAC testing (45%), while 55% of the respondents' children participated in testing. Although this is a small sample size, it represents a high proportion of opt-out rates compared to the general education population. The statewide participation rate for SBAC testing was approximately 94% in 2016-2017 (Oregon Department of Education, 2017).

Figure 3

Parent Attitudes toward SBAC Testing

Positive Attitudes Toward SBAC Among Parents

Legend: Parents: Opt-Out (n=9) Parents: Non-opt out (n=11)

Categories: Aligns with class curriculum; Provides useful information about students' learning; Provides useful information about impact of teaching; Serves as a good use of time and resources

Parent Attitudes Toward Testing and Opting-Out. Parents who opted-out their

children from SBAC testing showed fairly negative attitudes about testing, with none

agreeing that SBAC testing served as a good use of time and resources or provided

helpful information about teaching. Several parents who didn't opt-out their children

showed positive views about SBAC testing, especially regarding curriculum alignment

with testing. Parents reported different experiences with their own children when testing

and opting-out. Some teachers shared that they found SBAC testing helpful for their own

children to determine their progress and to help prepare their children for graduation

requirements. One teacher said, "Knowing the proficiency requirement for high school

graduation, I appreciate having an idea of how my child performs on a standardized

assessment now."

Implementation varied by school, and impacted students' experiences with testing. One parent shared, "Our boys are in a school that handles standardized testing in a really good way--super chill. Our kids weren't stressed, which is what we care about." Another parent said, "My children were not impressed with the test or with how their results were not shared thoroughly. They and I felt that a week spent preparing for the test was a week of lost instruction and progress." A middle school teacher said she's planning to opt-out her own child when he reaches that grade level, and said many of her friends in a teacher/parent social group will as well. An elementary school teacher talked about how her own children are college-bound, and she never cared about their test results because she didn't believe they accurately reflected her children's abilities. She said that she initially wanted to opt-out her own children, but forgot and missed the deadline. She also realized that the options for students opting-out weren't that great, as students usually had to just go sit somewhere while other students tested. A high school teacher's child was one of two at her 'low-income school' opting out, and she ended up just sitting in the office during testing. She mentioned that her own child resisted it a little because she was one of only a few kids opting out and felt ostracized. She compared her child's experience with the environment where she taught, a higher-SES school where there were about 5-10% of students opting-out, and "parents were more empowered" as she said. She found it "interesting and ironic" that higher opt-outs occurred in schools where consequences were less, and that those students won't be impacted as negatively as others.

Privilege. Several teachers mentioned the notion of privilege regarding their position as teachers and parents. A high school teacher described how "being a parent and

teacher complicates things," and that teachers know the "language of the system" and can advocate for their own children. Another high school teacher shared how she feels that parents have more power on this issue than teachers, so she supports the leadership of other parents in her social circles regarding opting-out. She mentioned she was surprised more parents weren't opting-out their children, but also noted that she realized that many parents aren't aware of how much testing is going on, and that "it's just part of school."

Engagement in Activism. Teachers participated in community organizations working to raise awareness of standardized testing and other issues around public education. Teachers engaged in multiple forms of activism which aligned with the Learning Power framework (Oakes & Rogers, 2007). Many teachers found ways to engage in resistance through more personal channels, such as opting their own children out of standardized testing and relating to other parents in their role as parents themselves. Various factors such as time and resources dedicated to testing shaped teachers' views about testing. They engaged in multiple forms of activism, both around standardized testing and more general issues in public education.

Learning Power Framework (Oakes and Rogers, 2007). This figure illustrates how respondents engaged in activism, for both the opt-out movement and general public education issues. The figure is organized by parental status, in which 'parents' represent parents of children attending public K-12 schools, and then whether or not those parents opted-out their own children from testing. The activity categories relate to the 'Learning Power' framework (Oakes & Rogers, 2007) of activism in education, and describe aspects of the three core elements: building relational power, producing knowledge, and engaging in collective action.

Figure 4

'Learning Power' and Teacher Activism
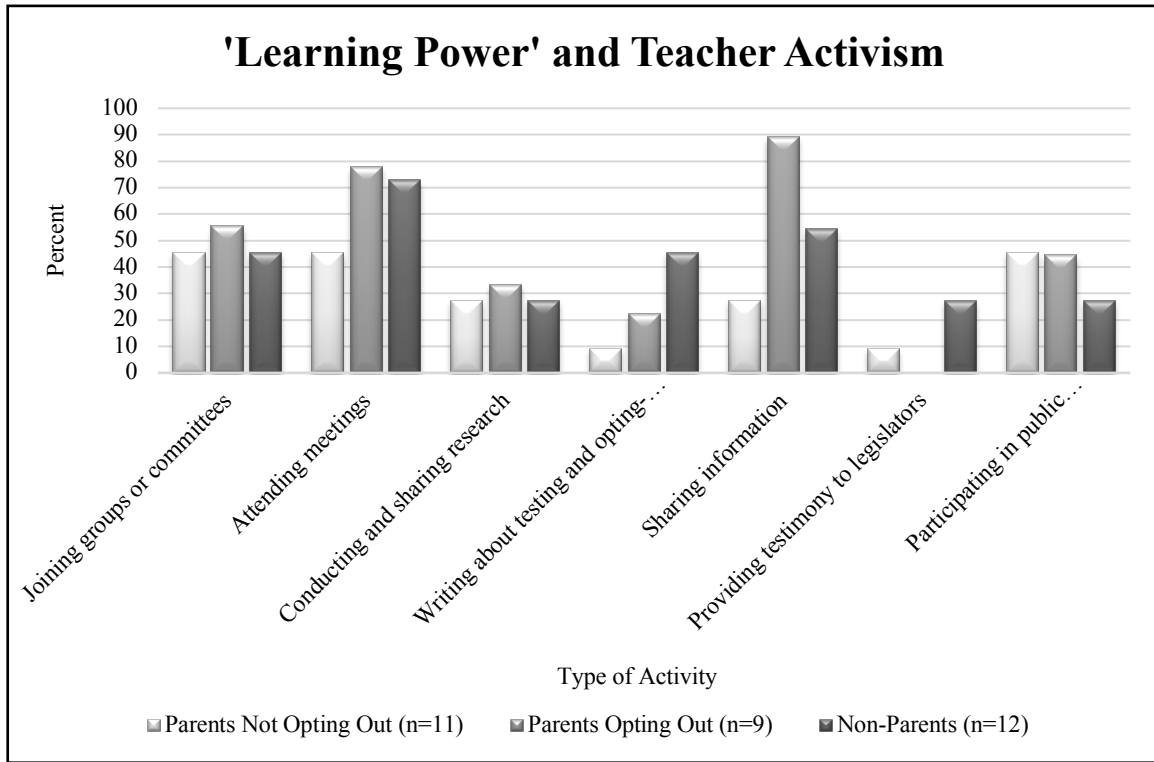
The survey categories indicate more specific actions within that framework. For example, 'building relational power' involves creating connections among other stakeholder and taking action by joining groups or committees and attending meetings and events related to testing and education. Some teachers shared how they leveraged relational power by speaking to students and parents about testing and opting-out, until they were told not to by administrators. The second element of 'Learning Power' involves knowledge production and dissemination, and teachers engaged in this type of action by sharing information about testing and opting out with other parents and people in their social circles. Some teachers were seen as point of contact for advice about testing, and other teachers referred families to speak to those teachers because they didn't feel comfortable. Teachers also engaged in collective action, for example almost half of the

parents who took this survey opted their own children out from SBAC testing (45%).

Teachers also participated in direct collective action such as public protests for issues

related to public education. "I never met a march I didn't like," said one teacher with a

laugh. How did they engage in activism? Sometimes teachers had to be subversive, and

they engaged in resistance somewhat under the radar from administrators at their schools.

Rhizomatic Resistance. When faced with administrative pressure about discussing

testing with students, some teachers sought other ways to raise awareness. A high school

teacher described her resistance practices as such: when told not to talk about something,

she embeds it in the curriculum. She described teaching a unit on standardized testing to

students, and incorporating messages of resistance from community members and

scholars. She brought a local community organization into her classes to talk to students

about standardized testing. They discussed opt-out options and provided information

about opting out, but she encouraged her students to do what's best for them and talk to

their family about testing.

A few teachers opted out of administering the tests themselves, and their requests

were accommodated by their administrators. Others resisted testing in more subtle ways,

such as stapling opt-out forms to the class syllabus for students. Another teacher notes

that "everything is activism at this point, challenging dominant narratives etc." One

participates in social justice/education conferences; another describes general activism

around certain educational issues, like institutionalized racism.

Privilege. Regarding activism, some teachers reported using their professional

privilege for greater good by deploying their professional expertise when needed. For

example, one teacher shared her experience in serving as an authentic voice of teaching

for people in her social and professional circles, as other parents sought out her advice to get the 'real' story on testing, not the administrative narrative that they had been hearing. A few teachers were pursuing doctoral studies, and noted the academic privilege stemming from advanced graduate studies. A high school teacher described how engaging in knowledge production through doctoral studies enabled her to push back on hegemonic norms there too. Several teachers described their quest for more knowledge and expertise about teaching and testing, and sought out more knowledge through participating in community events and conducting their own research. They described their appreciation for a community organization that served as an influential local source of information about testing and opting out. One teacher mentioned the organization's strong research and experienced leadership noting, "They're an inspiration, these retired teachers." She shares their research in her professional capacity as a teacher.

    Activism can involve risks. A few teachers described how opting out their own children puts their own children under pressure, as they're the ones going through it and potentially being singled out at their school. One teacher said, "As activist parents, we're asking our kids to do some things that are challenging for them." She said that it puts students who opt-out in a precarious situation for the broader goals of activism. Often there is no clear plan or supporting activities for students who opt-out during testing times. Students often have to sit in the school office with no assignments. They've sometimes been made to feel ostracized by school staff. Some parents did not opt out their own children because of these issues, even though they shared criticisms of the tests and supported the opt-out legislation.

Summary

Teachers engaged in various forms of resistance to standardized testing and participated in general activism around public education issues. Operating from their positions as teachers as well as parents, study participants described taking various actions that relate to the 'Learning Power' framework, which include building relational power, producing knowledge, and engaging in collective action. Participants built relational power by speaking students, families, and other parents in their social circles about testing, opting out, and other public education concerns. Sometimes this carried risk for teachers, as they were reprimanded for discussing opt-out options with students. Teachers also produced and disseminated knowledge through several avenues. A few teachers were pursuing doctoral studies and expanding their expertise around education. Others utilized their social networks and served as points of contact for other parents with questions about testing. Many others engaged in collective action of some sort, and almost half of the parents opted their own children out of standardized testing.

Different types of conditions and experiences motivated teachers, and some parents to engage in activism, including professional conditions such as loss of instruction time, strain on resources, and stress for students and teachers These conditions affected teachers' abilities to perform their job effectively, and also raised concerns about the impact of testing on students. Teachers were concerned that SBAC tests didn't provide useful information in a timely manner. As parents, they witnessed their own kids experience stress around testing, while they realized that test scored didn't define their children. Study participants utilized different networks to engage in activism. They pursued different channels for participation and deployed privilege toward those interests,

calling upon their professional teaching expertise in social circles even when their

professional voices were stifled in context of their teaching job.

V: DISCUSSION

Teachers contribute not only to their students' personal and academic development, but also to the social contexts of education. Their work in schools and classrooms provides insight into how educational policy interacts with teaching and learning. The recent implementation of opt-out legislation in Oregon provided an opportunity to examine the various factors operating in the midst of standardized testing and students opting out, particularly from the viewpoint of teachers. In this study, I approached the opt-out movement as a mapping or assemblage and focused on a particular context, place, and time. Within this context, I attempted to map the different flows of policy and how testing conditions produced certain responses among teachers, which gave rise to teacher activism in some cases. I considered how and why teachers engaged in resistance to high-stakes testing, and how personal and professional subjectivities influenced teacher activism. I also looked at how their parental status influenced their engagement in activism, specifically regarding testing and opting-out.

Summary of Findings

Through qualitative analysis of policy documents, interviews and a survey, several important themes emerged about teachers and their interactions with standardized testing and the opt-out movement. Teachers experienced overlapping layers of policy, pertaining to both testing and opting-out, which sparked engagement in activism for some. Depending on the conditions at their respective schools, some teachers felt their professional voice was stifled around matters of testing and opting-out, so they reached out in other directions. They accessed different channels for participation based on social

and personal networks and shared their professional expertise with other parents and community members.

Relating to the "Learning Power" framework (Oakes & Rogers, 2007), teachers built relational power by connecting with other parents in their role as parents, through informal communications and personal networks. They also tapped into the power of their unions and community organizations to generate collective statements of solidarity, especially in support of opt-out legislation. Teachers created knowledge around testing and the opt-out process by sharing their professional expertise. In some cases, they provided witness testimony to state legislators about policy. Teachers described how their professional training around pedagogy and assessment contributed to their criticisms of high-stakes standardized testing, and they shared that knowledge with other parents, teachers, and community members. Teachers also engaged in collective action by opting out their own children from testing, writing letters to the editor, attending public protests, and other activities. By expressing both their personal views as parents, and their professional knowledge as teachers, they served as important voices in the legislative process and the implementation of testing and opt-out policies. Through 'learning power,' teachers can play an even stronger role in policy development, utilizing both their personal perspectives and professional expertise to influence decisions around public education.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the rhizome provided an intriguing way to map the complexity of teacher activism and the opt-out movement. They write, "Tracing and maps are not a dualism; rather, the relationship of the tracing and the map refers to 'paradoxical forces at work together in an assemblage,'" (Deleuze & Guattari,

1987, p. 12). Teachers' discussions of how they navigated their personal and professional subject positions referenced the conflicting perspectives they encountered and how that impacted their participation in activism.

Implications for Policy

This study examined the connections between Oregon's testing and opt-out policies and teacher resistance and activism. H.B. 2655 was implemented in 2015 and has been in effect for three full years. During that time, state and federal requirements have shifted as well, specifically with a return to more state flexibility under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) passed in 2015. As teachers and students experienced different shifts in policy, they also engaged in resistance and activism, which then contributed to further shifts in policy. Following several years of SBAC testing and opting-out, Oregon has responded to criticisms about testing from parents, students, and teachers. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) recently announced it will drop SBAC testing for 11th grade students next year, 2019, based on 'stakeholder feedback' (Gewertz, 2017).

Opt-out and testing implementation varied widely, even though there were uniform requirements across the state. Teachers described changes that occurred as a result of policy changes. When SBAC testing first began several years ago, teachers were told it was really hard and teachers reported that everyone was nervous. Based on the perceived high stakes of the tests, many teachers and students experienced anxiety around testing during the first years of implementation. Teachers were reprimanded and 'threatened' for answering student questions and talking about the opt-out process. "Kids and parents were confused and punished if they opted out," said one teacher. Initially, some teachers threatened students that they would be harming the school if they opted-

out. Some teachers believed in the system of testing, while other teachers didn't

necessarily support testing, but went through with it because it was their job. One teacher

remarked,"If more teachers spoke up, others would follow." Other teachers took more

resistant stances, including opting out from administering SBAC testing to their students.

The opt-out process became easier after the passage of H.B. 2655, but it is still not

always clear, especially for non-English speaking parents. Teachers noted that forms were

hard to find online or were sent home in non-descript envelopes possibly seen as 'junk

mail.' Opt-outs are still discouraged by some districts/schools, and many teachers are still

discouraged from mentioning the opt out process. At this point, many schools have

developed procedures around opting-out, and teachers are told to refer questions by

students to administrators in the office, where they can pick up opt-out forms. Teachers

can't necessarily 'advertise' to parents and students, but other approaches weren't denied

at some schools, such as sending home opt-out forms with class syllabi. Several teachers

reported informing parents and students of all their options including opting-out,

regardless of school policies. "Any conversations were on the down low," one teacher

said. Another teacher said she mentioned opting-out to some students individually who

were really stressed out about testing.

Teachers noticed a shift after the transition from NCLB to ESSA, and one teacher

said it seemed less heavy-handed now and "they're not using test scores for any

actionable consequences." Previously, one teacher's son opted out and was ostracized

(third grade), but that shifted after H.B. 2655, and it wasn't as big of a deal. Some

teachers mentioned that families feel more empowered to opt-out now as well, and

students were more vocal about it after the opt-out legislation passed. At one high school,

students organized an event about testing and opting-out framed around the idea that "testing culture is killing kids." Teachers also shared how the work of a community organization impacted the opt-out movement locally, as they informed families and supported teachers. "Thanks to the advocacy of an activist group, opting out has become easier for parents, though students who do not test are not adequately supported, particularly in the early grades," one teacher said. After passage of H.B. 2655, opt-out rates have increased each year (Roemeling, 2017).

This research demonstrates the importance of considering the outcomes and potential consequences of educational policies by those crafting and implementing them, as recent testing and opt-out policies have shifted in response to stakeholder feedback. Data from this study shows that policies around testing and opting-out varied across schools and grade levels. Uniform requirements didn't necessarily bridge different practices, and teachers and students adjusted to local contexts of testing and opting-out. In order to access the potential of assessment and data-driven practices, research on effective assessment practices should inform educational policy, along with feedback from teachers and students. When assessments are used effectively, they have the potential to create systemic change by influencing decisions and improving performance at all levels of education. In order to accomplish that, assessment systems need to be equitable and truly measure what they're intended to measure. They should be used as tools to improve practice and inform decisions, rather than to pass judgment and impose punitive sanctions. While assessment and accountability systems stem from the need to provide quality education, the sanctions imposed on schools can often cause more damage than good. Assessments should align with their intended uses or purposes and

provide useful information for decision-making, and attention should be paid to implementation processes as well.

Implications for Practice

This study also demonstrates the critical role that teachers play in implementing and resisting educational policies, specifically around standardized testing. While their work is defined by pedagogical expertise and instruction, some teachers reported that their personal values conflicted with their professional responsibilities and requirements regarding testing. Teachers play a role in educating families, and when students and parents have questions, they often seek teacher input. Teachers in this study reported being put in positions of conflict when trying to answer student and family questions about testing based on their honest professional knowledge. Study participants discussed how their practice was defined not just by teaching and individual interactions with students around content, but by their participation in school practices as well. Individual teachers took individual risks at times, and some have been reprimanded for answering questions about testing. Some felt their professional voice was stifled in many ways, even as the 'collective voice' of teachers' unions took strong and public positions in support of opting-out.

Teachers observed the ways that power and authority operated in the implementation of SBAC testing. They described tensions between the words and actions of administrators, in which the school leaders would say they didn't agree with all the testing apologetically, but still follow through on administering testing. "It felt very top down, like this is the thing that we have to do now, so you're just going to do it. I got the sense that maybe at the district level, administration didn't really like it either, but they

have to toe the party line," noted a teacher. Some participants said that due to ethical concerns, they engaged in resistance toward testing despite professional requirements. Teachers discussed their perceptions of equity and privilege, often recognizing that testing impacted different student populations differently and that their own views were influenced by their positions of relative social advantage and insider knowledge of educational systems. These insights have broader relevance in education as teachers have a unique vantage point at the intersection of policy and practice.Teachers' professional expertise should be valued and sought out, and reflective teaching practices can encourage teachers to explore aspects of subjectivity and how their positions shape their work.

When teachers speak from the pedagogical perspective their work affords them, that should be recognized and should inform policy makers and administrators. By looking at expanded notions of teacher power, we can see their influence extends beyond the classroom in multiple ways. Many teachers brought their professional expertise into other domains as they interact with friends, colleagues, and other parents. Teachers in this study engaged in multiple forms of activism around educational issues, finding additional outlets to have an impact. Based on their direct experiences, many teachers questioned whether current testing practices were beneficial and being implemented appropriately. Teacher activism played a role in policy shifts from the classroom and beyond.

Implications for Theory

Through activism and participating in public policy, teachers were able to call upon multiple aspects of their subject positions. The concept of the rhizome represents "multiple connections from a variety of perspectives that are not rooted in a single

concept or small group of concepts" (May, 2005). This was illustrated by the ways teachers have positioned themselves when becoming involved in the opt-out movement. Teacher resistance to these policies have emerged in a multiplicitous fashion. These multiplicities aren't replicable or generalizable but do represent the various forms of resistance that teachers participated in. "A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature," (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 30). As teachers described their professional concerns related to testing, many also invoked their role as parents and described the negative impacts of testing on their own children. In this sense, their personal and professional subjectivities shifted to create a stronger message of resistance, much like the rhizomatic taproot system described by Deleuze & Guattari (1987), "In nature, roots are taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one," (p. 27).

Many teachers observed a nebulous atmosphere of pressure and judgment pervading the SBAC testing, which manifested as fear and stress. The tests served in an evaluative capacity, and students, teachers, and administrators felt judged, whether the results directly impacted them or not. For example, teachers reported that students exhibited a lot of test anxiety, even though the test results didn't affect them. Teachers reported feeling pressure for students to perform well, even though there weren't specific consequences tied to the results. Administrators also felt pressure for sufficient test performance, as they reported to state and federal officials that controlled funding. According to study participants, the degree of pressure didn't correspond to the real outcomes, as dire consequences never seemed to transpire. Test performance can affect

school ratings, which can indirectly impact school choice decisions and thus funding, but these consequences seemed somewhat abstract to study participants.

By applying the concept of the rhizome to this particular example of resistance and activism, I noticed this atmosphere of fear that pervaded the experiences of teachers and students. I could see the way different policies and communications can be interpreted based on social context, as testing and opting-out were dealt with differently in different schools. Policy changes brought more access to students in terms of being able to opt-out of testing, but implementation of testing shifted subtly to accommodate policy change while quietly discouraging opting-out. For example, one teacher mentioned that her school began testing much earlier in the year to discourage opting-out. Even after opt-out legislation passed in Oregon, teachers still reported being reprimanded for talking to students about opting-out. They reported pressure to "follow the rules," even as the "rules" presented a conflict with their professional expertise. Teachers shared that these tensions sometimes sparked instances of resistance in matters around testing and other issues in education.

As teachers engaged in educational activism, they represented a multitude of viewpoints and intentions, coalescing into a broader movement that seeks similar outcomes. Deleuze & Guattari (1987) write, "A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances related to the arts, sciences, and social struggles," (p. 30). Deleuze & Guattari's notion of the rhizome relates to this process, particularly how teachers sought to create connections, build alliances, and disrupt the hegemonic endeavor of standardized testing. As Semetsky (2008) notes, "The rhizome represents movements in diverse directions instead of a

single path, multiplying its own lines and establishing the plurality of unpredictable connections in the open-ended smooth space of its growth," (p. xv).

Future Research

As I started examining all of this data, more questions came up about different ways of analyzing the multiple layers of information. I selected critical and post-structural theoretical perspectives to guide this study, but I considered material feminist theoretical concepts as well. When I originally began thinking about this project, I considered applying Jane Bennett's concept of the agentic assemblage (2009) in an analysis of how the opt-out movement emerged in Oregon, and the different forces involved that produced policy change. Bennett (2009) offers a material feminist perspective of distributive agency, and describes how a variety of human- and non-human "actants" serve as a "swarm of vitalities" at work. Deliberate intentionality on the part of an acting subject loses its definitive power, and we see more emergent agency rising from the network of actants involved and their interactions. Bennett (2009) writes,

> A theory of distributive agency…does not posit a subject as the root cause
> of an effect. There are always a swarm of vitalities at play. The task
> becomes to identify the contours of the swarm and the kind of relations
> that obtain between its bits
> (p. 32).

Bennett's (2009) concept of the agentic assemblage illustrates dispersed agency, and how a broad range of actants, both human and material, can interact to create change. In this case, I thought about how standardized testing and accountability policies, and even the tests themselves, produced certain professional and personal experiences as

teachers and parents. These experiences motivated some teachers to become more involved in teacher activism, and participation in activism around standardized testing then produced different effects in terms of policy changes. Bennett's (2009) conceptions of distributive agency and agentic assemblage present promising new ways of contextualizing complex situations, such as teacher activism and resistance to high-stakes testing. In future research, I'd consider applying this material feminist perspective of distributed agency, described as an agentic assemblage by Bennett, to look at the various factors and forces, or actants, that have influenced teacher activism in the opt-out movement. In this sense, I would look at how resistance arises and transpires, with teachers as subjects participating in the system as an integral part of the swarm, the assemblage, the rhizome…yet looking at broader notions of material and discursive actants, and decentering teacher subjectivity as the primary source of power or agentic capacity. By applying material feminist views of agency, we can enhance how we deal with these issues. As important, we can also view and interpret the various actants that influence how teachers engage in complex issues that impact both their professional and personal lives.

Summary

Public education has seen substantial shifts in testing policy as a result of the opt-out movement, a social movement that emerged out of resistance to standardized testing. Teachers served as important points of contact in this discussion, as they represented their positions as practicing professionals as well as parents in some cases. As described in previous chapters, the teaching field needs to recruit, retain, and sustain engaged, committed educators to continue supporting the interests of public education. We need

teachers who are willing and capable of addressing social issues as well as cognitive learning goals in the classroom. We also need to focus on social justice, as true education reform cannot be achieved without attention to socioeconomic inequities. In the case of standardized testing and the opt-out movement, this study highlights the importance of weighing the costs and benefits of standardized testing for all stakeholders. This conversation should include teachers, as they offer their professional knowledge and experience, as well as their close-up view of the impact of testing on students and instruction.

This study connects to broader issues facing public education right now, as teacher activism has expanded in multiple states around the U.S. This past spring, statewide teacher strikes happened in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona, and smaller strikes occurred in Colorado, Kentucky, and North Carolina. Teachers have also begun running for political office recently as well, for example, twelve current or former teachers won primary elections in Kentucky in May 2018 (Barton, 2018). These broader political events point to the importance of research around teacher activism, exploring what it is, how it happens, and what change can happen as a result. This study attempted to do just that, in an exploration of the connection between policy, practice, and activism.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL

O | UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

DATE: December 07, 2017   **IRB Protocol Number: 11082017.010**

TO: Krystal Sundstrom-Hebert, Principal Investigator
Department of Education Studies

RE: Protocol entitled, "Rhizomatic Resistance: Teacher Activism and the Opt-Out Movement"

<center>

**Notice of IRB Review and Exempt Determination
as per Title 45 CFR Part 46.101 (b)(2)**

</center>

The above protocol has been reviewed by the University of Oregon Institutional Review Board and Research Compliance Services. This is a minimal risk research protocol that qualifies for an exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) for research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.

Please note that you will not be required to submit continuing reviews for this protocol, however, you must submit any changes to the protocol to Research Compliance Services for assessment to verify that the protocol continues to qualify for exemption. **This exempt determination will expire December 06, 2022.** Should your research continue beyond expiration date, you will need to submit a new protocol application.

Your responsibility as a Principal Investigator also includes:
- Obtaining written documentation of the appropriate permissions from public school districts, institutions, agencies, or other organizations, etc., prior to conducting your research
- Notifying Research Compliance Services of any change in Principal Investigator
- Notifying Research Compliance Services of any changes to or supplemental funding
- Retaining copies of this determination, any signed consent forms, and related research materials for five years after conclusion of your study or the closure of your sponsored research, whichever comes last.

As with all Human Subject Research, exempt research is subject to periodic Post Approval Monitoring review.

If you have any questions regarding your protocol or the review process, please contact Research Compliance Services at ResearchCompliance@uoregon.edu or (541)346-2510.

Sincerely,

Kalindi Allen
Research Compliance Administrator

CC: Juliet Baxter, Faculty Advisor

APPENDIX B. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

I. Demographics

Q1. What year were you born? Please enter:

Q2. What is your gender?
1. Female
2. Male
3. Other, please specify:

Q3: Which categories describe you?
Select all that apply. You may select more than one group.
1. American Indian or Alaska Native
2. Asian
3. Black or African American
4. Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
5. Middle Eastern or North African
6. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
7. White
8. Some other race, ethnicity, or origin:

Q4. What is the highest degree or level of education you've completed?
1. High school degree or equivalent
2. Some college but no degree
3. Associate's degree
4. Bachelor's degree
5. Professional Degree or License
6. Master's Degree
7. Doctoral Degree (PhD or EdD)

Q5. What is your average household income, per year?
1. Less than $24,999
2. $25,000-$49,999
3. $50,000-$74,999
4. $75,000-$99,999
5. $100,000 and greater

Q6. Did you vote in the last general election (2016)?
1. Yes
2. No

Q7. What political party are you registered with, if any?
1. Democratic
2. Independent

3. Republican
4. Non-Affiliated
5. Other: (please specify)

Q8. Are you the parent or guardian of any children attending public schools, currently or within the past three years?
1. Yes (if yes, include Section IV)
2. No (if no, exit after Section III)

II. Teaching Profession

Q9. How many years have you been teaching at the K-12 level?
1. 1-2 years
2. 3-5 years
3. 6-10 years
4. 11-20 years
5. 21+ years

Q10. Which district do you currently teach in?
1. Eugene 4J
2. Springfield
3. Bethel
4. Other: (please specify)

Q11. Is your current school designated as a Title I or low-income school?
1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

Q12. Which grade do you currently teach?
(drop down: K-12)

Q13. Please select the grades you taught during each of the following school years.
2014-2015: (drop down: K-12, didn't teach)
2015-2016: (drop down: K-12, didn't teach)
2016-2017: (drop down: K-12, didn't teach)

Introduction: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessments were implemented in Oregon beginning in 2014. The SBAC assessments are administered to students in Grades 3-8 and 11 on an annual basis.

Q14. As a teacher, what do you think about the SBAC assessments?
In your opinion, do the SBAC assessments…
o Align with your current curriculum? Yes, Somewhat, Not Really, No
o Provide useful information about your students' learning? Yes, Somewhat, Not Really, No

o   Provide useful information about the the impact of your teaching? Yes, Somewhat, Not Really, No
o   Serve as a good use of instructional time and resources? Yes, Somewhat, Not Really, No

Q15. Please share any additional comments about the SBAC assessments from a teacher's perspective.
(Short answer)

Q16. What was the implementation process like for SBAC testing during the past 3 years at your school? (2014-2017)
1.   Mostly positive, most teachers and administrators on board
2.   Somewhat positive, mixed reactions among teachers and/or administrators
3.   Somewhat negative, some resistance among teachers and/or administrators
4.   Mostly negative, strong resistance among teachers and/or administrators

Q17. Please share any additional comments about the SBAC implementation process at your school and/or district.
(Short answer)

Q18. What was the process like for parents to opt-out their children from SBAC testing at your school? Within your district?
1.   Clear, easy, and organized
2.   Somewhat easy and organized
3.   Somewhat confusing or difficult
4.   Very Difficult or Discouraged

Q19. Please share any additional comments about the opt-out process for parents at your school and/or within your district.
(Short answer)

Q20. Oregon passed HB 2655 in 2015, a law which granted parents' rights to opt-out their child(ren) from standardized testing. Were you aware of this legislation?
1.   Yes (if yes, Q20a-b)
2.   No

Q20a. Were you in favor of this legislation?
1.   Yes
2.   No
3.   Not sure

Q20b. Did you participate in any organizing or actions around this legislation?
1.   Yes (If yes, go to III. Activism)
2.   No (If no, go to IV if parent, or Exit survey)

III. Activism

Q21. Please select all the activities that you participated in pertaining to standardized testing and the opt-out movement. You can also share details about additional activities.

Joining groups or committees, such as parent organizations, school committees, community groups, etc.
Attending meetings, such as school board meetings, parent/community groups, etc.
Conducting and sharing research about standardized testing and opting-out
Writing about standardized testing and opting-out, including letters to the editor, social media posts, etc.
Sharing information about standardized testing and opting-out, including opt-out forms and resources, news articles, etc.
Providing written or oral testimony to state legislators regarding Oregon's opt-out policy
Participating in public demonstrations about educational issues, including standardized testing
Additional activities: (short answer)

Q22. Please share any additional comments about activism, from a parent or teacher perspective.

IV. Parent Section: Opt-Out

Q23. Please select your child(ren)'s current grade level:
Child 1: K-12
Child 2: K-12
Child 3: K-12
Add More:

Q24. Did you have any child(ren) graduate during the past 3 years?
If yes, please enter graduation year(s):

Untested Grades: (K-2, 9-10, 12)

Q25U. Do you think you would you opt-out your child(ren) from SBAC testing, if they were being tested?
1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

Q26U. Please share any additional comments about SBAC testing from your perspective as a parent.
(Short answer)

Tested Grades: (3-8, 11)

Q25T. Did you opt-out your child(ren) from SBAC testing at any point during the past 3 years? (2014-2017)
   1. Yes (Go to Q26T1)
   2. No (Go to Q26T2)

1. (Opted out)
Q26T1. Which years did you opt-out your children from SBAC testing? Please select all that apply.
   1. 2014-2015
   2. 2015-2016
   3. 2016-2017

Q27T1. Why did you choose to opt-out your child(ren) from SBAC testing? Please describe the factors that contributed to your decision.
(short answer)

Q28T1. Did you encounter any challenges to opting-out your child(ren) from SBAC testing?
   1. Yes (If yes, please describe)
   2. No

Q29T1. Please share any additional comments about SBAC testing and/or opting out from your perspective as a parent.
(Short answer)

2. (Not opted out)
Q26T2. As a parent, did SBAC test results provide useful information about your child(ren)'s academic progress?
   1. Yes
   2. Somewhat
   3. Not really
   4. No
   5. Never saw results

Q27T2. How was the testing experience, from your child(ren)'s perspective?
Positive --- Neutral ---- Negative

Q28T2. Please share any additional comments about SBAC testing from your perspective as a parent.
(Short answer)

Next: Survey Complete! Thank you for your time and willingness to share your thoughts about teaching and the opt-out movement.

Next Screen: I'm also conducting follow-up interviews for this study, which will take approximately 30 minutes. These interviews will allow for a more in-depth discussion of teacher activism and the opt-out movement.

If you'd like more information about participating in an interview, please enter your best contact information here: (Email; Phone--text, call)

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SBAC assessments were implemented in Oregon beginning in AY 2014-2015.

1. As a teacher, what do you think about the SBAC assessments?

2. What kind of environment existed for teachers around implementing SBAC assessments at your school? Within your district?

3. How has SBAC testing been framed when discussed with teachers, staff, and administrators at your school? Within your district?

4. Does student performance on SBAC assessments impact evaluations of your teaching?
   a. If so, how? What do you think about that?

5. Did your school and/or district provide any guidance for teachers about how to talk to parents about SBAC testing and opting out?

6. What kind of environment existed for teachers around the opt-out movement at your school? Within your district?

7. Please share any additional details, thoughts, or experiences about SBAC testing and/or the opt-out movement from your perspective as a teacher.

8. Have you participated in any activities or organizing around standardized testing and public education? If so, please tell me more about your activities and your reasons for pursuing them.

Parents:

1. Did you opt-out your own children from SBAC testing? Please tell me more about why you decided to opt-out **OR** not opt-out your child(ren).

2. Please share any additional details, thoughts, or experiences about SBAC testing and/or the opt-out movement from your perspective as a parent.

3. How has your perspective as both a teacher and a parent influenced your views about standardized testing and the opt-out movement?

Final Question: Are there any additional thoughts or comments you'd like to share?

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