

Cassandra in the classroom: teaching and moral madness¹

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Labeling another as crazy, as mad, undercuts a speaker's reliability as a moral agent and renders their moral claims suspect. When a person's moral claims are not recognized as moral and the individual is disregarded as a moral agent, they may experience far more than a feeling of disrespect. They may feel as though they are going mad. This paper investigates, from the perspective of feminist ethics, the case of a teacher experiencing moral madness as she attempts to enact the moral responsibility she believes her professional role demands.

The global education reform movement (GERM), spurred by notions of profit and reliant on an interchangeable and compliant labor force, places the moral goods of teaching in jeopardy.² In an era of market-based education reforms, commitments to ethical relations in schools come off as quaint, concerns about character are parsed into social-emotional learning competencies. Teachers who criticize or question practice and policy mandates out of a sense of professional obligation risk being labeled insubordinate, and worse, only self-interested.

Teachers may enter the profession for reasons that carry moral weight, whether they are committed to creating classroom communities built on mutual respect and democratic principles or who understand their roles as shaping habits of mind as they engage students in content, for instance. Other teachers may view themselves as professionally responsible for advocating for their students and their communities. Teachers who assign moral responsibility to their roles may find that the moral goods – the moral sources of professional meaning and significance – are disappearing. When educational policies and school leaders outline desirable teacher qualities in terms of obedience and detachment, teachers who persist in exercising their moral agency under these conditions may experience moral madness.

Moral madness, I argue, is a symptom of moral violence. Through a feminist ethical analysis of the figure of Greek myth's Cassandra and a case of a teacher engaging in what she believes is professional behavior, I will identify three strategies utilized in the work of moral violence. Philosopher Kathryn Pauly Morgan describes moral madness as the attempt to enact moral responsibility and fulfill moral expectations in a system that does not recognize an individual as a moral agent.

When an individual occupies a gendered subject location, irrespective of their sex assigned at birth or the gender with which they identify, they may experience moral madness. Morgan describes the moral double-bind experienced by those who perform reproductive labor. Even though the moral and social significance of reproductive labor is extolled in popular discourse,

¹ One of my earliest research participants said that she felt like a Cassandra. Her words launched me into this writing, nearly a decade later.

² Pasi Sahlberg, *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?* New York: Teachers College, 2011.

the moral agency of those who perform the work is simultaneously denied and/or rendered suspect. This moral double-bind can lead to moral madness due to the

various ways in which a woman's moral voice and her sense of moral integrity can be twisted and destroyed by patriarchal ideology and lived experience ... ultimately, this experience can lead to a genuine sense of confusion and a kind of moral madness which is then cited, in a patriarchal culture, to further discredit a woman's moral subjectivity.³

The first strategy entails the reversal of vices and virtues. Behaviors previously considered virtues become vices and those behaviors once considered vices are now virtuous. For example, some teachers may have been taught that professional responsibility requires that they speak out if they believe they witness student suffering or educational malpractice. A teacher advocating on behalf of students or the profession may find that what they believed was virtuous behavior is now shunned. They may also be deeply confused that desirable behavior (read now as "fidelity of instruction," for instance) was once characterized in terms of moral lapse (previously understood as remaining silent or abdicating responsibility).

The second strategy of moral violence that may lead to moral madness involves assigning individuals moral responsibility for situations in which they have not been given sufficient power to exercise that responsibility. For instance, "every student succeeds" is a moral injunction written into the 2015 reauthorization of the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act. No teacher (or human being) has the power to ensure that every student succeeds, even if he works tirelessly towards the goal of each student's success.

Barbara Houston extends Morgan's description of moral madness to highlight the imbalance of moral responsibility with moral agency. She argues that moral madness surfaces when individuals are held responsible without being given commensurate authority to fulfill their responsibility or the opportunity to question the terms of their responsibility.⁴ Houston explains that this moral responsibility may be "exercised in conditions in which the social structures are likely to deform our caring or disguise it as a form of consent to the status quo."⁵ The ethic of care can be manipulated, especially in contexts where power is gendered and out of balance. Lisa Tessman explains that moral damage occurs with "responsibility outruns control."⁶ When teachers view their moral responsibilities much more broadly than they are able to inhabit, I argue it could also lead to a form of moral madness.

Finally, drawing on the figure of Cassandra, I introduce the third strategy that can lead to moral madness: refusing to recognize an individual's moral claims as moral. This posture effectively erases or rejects the person's moral agency and moral credibility. In this strategy, those in power wave away an individual's moral claims as nonsense or recast them as self-serving. For instance, a teacher who raises concerns about the suitability of a new textbook for students may be

³ Kathryn Pauly Morgan, "Women and Moral Madness," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Vol. 13*, 1987: 201-226, 201-202.

⁴ Barbara Houston, "Rescuing Womanly Virtues: Some Dangers of Moral Reclamation," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Vol. 13*, 1987: 237-262; Morgan, 226.

⁵ Houston, 252.

⁶ Lisa Tessman, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.

characterized as a teacher who does not want to adapt to a novel approach to the content area. There is a chance that this interpretation may be the source of the teacher's criticism. However, if the teacher's criticism is rejected out-of-hand as only possibly coming from a place of self-interest, there is no way to assay if it conveyed a legitimate moral concern.

In this feminist ethical analysis, I begin by arguing that teaching is a feminized subject position. As work characterized as reproductive labor, the work of teaching sets up conditions that affect persons of any gender, even though gender expression and identity will inform the experience of the person inhabiting the role. Then, I turn to a philosophical and psychoanalytic reading of Greek myth's Cassandra. Through a feminist ethical analysis of Cassandra, I identify the third strategy of moral violence that can lead to moral madness. Cassandra can serve as an archetype for teachers of any gender who grapple with understanding why they are dismissed, and sometimes denigrated, when they voice moral concerns about their work. In the last full section, I draw on the tools developed through the feminist ethical analysis of moral madness to examine the case of Monica, a teacher who thought she was losing her mind.

Teaching as reproductive labor

There are many ways to examine the economic and political forces behind GERM, or market-based educational reform efforts and how those affect women. I engage in a feminist ethical analysis of the moral discourse of teachers. I show that when teachers' moral concerns are disregarded as purely personal or emotional responses, those misunderstandings can lead to moral madness. Moral madness is a *symptom* of moral violence, a form of harm that occurs when an individual's moral agency is systematically and/or repeatedly denied, denigrated or constrained.

Moral madness is an effect of moral violence. One strand of moral violence in organizations is practices such as mass firings and public humiliations that intimidate and inspire fear amongst employees.⁷ These strategies are certainly present in U.S. public schools where test scores from teachers' classes may be published in newspapers and federal education policy has supported the closure of schools and/or firing of an entire school faculty. These practices, while loathsome and destructive, depict a somewhat straightforward form of moral violence. They can be easily witnessed and identified. They threaten employment and wellbeing. While market-based reformers argue that schools need to learn from business, organizational researchers have shown that punitive measures such as these undermine organizational success, not to mention that schools are qualitatively different from businesses.⁸

I focus on a more insidious form of moral violence that operates through gendered access to power. Those who commit moral violence may undermine moral subjectivity by invalidating a subject's moral claims through questioning their credibility and authority. Furthermore, they exercise moral violence in a way that obliterates moral subjectivity by refusing to recognize the subject's claims as motivated by moral concerns.

⁷ Michael A. Diamond and Seth Allcorn, "Moral Violence in Organizations: Hierarchic Dominance and the Absence of Potential Space," *Organisational & Social Dynamics* 4 (1), 2004: 22-45, 28.

⁸ Diamond and Allcorn, 40-41.

In the U.S., teaching is a feminized subject position because it is viewed as “women’s work.”⁹ Partly, this assignation is as a result of the large majority of women who are employed as teachers in the United States. Yet, beyond the demographic characteristics, teaching is categorized as reproductive labor and grouped with childcare, nursing, and social work. Reproductive labor is usually associated with tasks that do not produce tangible goods, but enable the productivity of others.

Feminist ethics have many purposes and methods.¹⁰ Generally, the purpose of feminist ethics is corrective as well as expansive. Philosopher Margaret Urban Walker explains, “Feminists ask what the consequences are of ... social arrangements for people’s moral standings, for the moral understandings that keep those standings in place, *and* for the reflective study of those moral understandings that is ethics.”¹¹ What distinguishes the methods of feminist ethics from “traditional” ethical accounts is that they explore the role of gender and concomitant issues of power that may distort or influence the shape of moral theories. Importantly, feminist ethics illuminate gender-based moral trouble that might not be recognized if the work did it not to look at women’s experiences or those in strongly-gendered environments. Furthermore, feminist ethical analyses can explore the ways in which gender-based power enables moral concerns to be recognized (or not).

Analyzing the moral challenges encountered in the reproductive labor of teaching requires a feminist ethical analysis. Only by incorporating a feminist perspective that addresses power in the institutional context of teachers’ work will we be able to unpack the particular challenges of moral work in a feminized profession. A full account of professional ethics must consider the gendered dimensions of power and the material conditions that shape what counts as moral responsibility. How might the gendered subject position of teaching establish moral norms that simultaneously create barriers to enacting moral responsibility? How might we understand the double-bind teachers may encounter when they attempt to make moral claims about their work?

Moral madness in a moral profession

Many philosophers of education and teacher educators describe teaching as a moral profession.¹² However, teachers who attempt to raise moral concerns about their work may face conditions similar to Cassandra’s. While I do not claim that teachers have prophetic vision, they do have the

⁹ See Michael W. Apple and Susan Jungck, “‘You Don’t Have to Be a Teacher to Teach this Unit.’ Teaching, Technology, and Gender in the Classroom,” *American Educational Research Journal* 27 (2), 227-251; Sari Knopp Biklen, *School Work: Gender and the Cultural Construction of Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995); Regina Cortina and Sonsoles San Román, eds. *Women and Teaching: Global Perspectives on the Feminization of a Profession* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Madeline Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

¹⁰ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014); Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

¹¹ Walker, 27.

¹² Elizabeth Campbell, “The Virtuous, Wise, and Knowledgeable Teacher: Living the Good Life as a Professional Practitioner,” *Educational Theory*, 63 (4), 2013: 413-430; Chris Higgins, *The Good Life of Teaching* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); David Carr, “Professional and Personal Values and Virtues in Education and Teaching,” *Oxford Review of Education* 32 (2): 171-183, 2006; Gary D. Fenstermacher and Virginia Richardson. 2005. “On Making Determinations of Quality in Teaching.” *Teachers College Record* 107 (1): 186-213, 2005; John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Kenneth A. Sirotnik, ed. *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.

power to give voice to the effects of policy in schools and classrooms that might not be known or anticipated by policymakers or school leaders. Teachers' ability to witness the harm that comes to students, their communities, faculty and schools may cause them to voice their concerns about policies and practices emotionally and passionately. Teachers may feel as though they are going mad when trying to exercise professional responsibility, but find that their efforts are viewed simplistically as self-serving or as literal nonsense.

I am interested the effects of not being regarded as a reliable moral agent for teachers who believe that their professional roles imbue them with moral responsibility. The moral claims of teachers, I argue, are often not examined alongside the moral claims of leaders or policymakers, but are rendered irrelevant, and even immoral, by those with more institutional power.¹³ A feminist analysis of moral madness reveals one way the feminized subject position of teaching influences the experiences of many teachers, regardless of gender. In the U.S., public school teachers find themselves in a bind. They are exalted as moral exemplars and expected to be held to the highest standards of moral conduct while they are simultaneously rendered morally unreliable. They are told that their work is of the greatest social worth, but they are denigrated in the media and often face battles for cost of living salary increases.

The lowest level of moral behavior is expected of teachers: rule-following or adhering to an eviscerated and externally-directed ideal of caring pales in cognitive, affective, and moral complexity compared to engaging in forms of autonomous and collective professional moral judgment. Public school teachers are on-the-hook morally to be responsible to students, their profession, and a civic institution, but the domains where they are permitted to express their moral concerns are tightly circumscribed. When teachers encounter policies that they believe are harmful to students, such as high-stakes testing or rigid curriculum pacing, and speak out against those policies their claims may be viewed as insubordination or intransigence. When teachers believe that it is their professional responsibility to speak up when they witness wrongdoing or harm, they may be befuddled by the interpretation that their concerns are self-seeking or worse, acts of moral transgression.

The current pedagogical policy environment sets up a logic and circumscribes the ways in which teachers' criticisms regarding pedagogical policy or mandated practices are heard. Because current policy sets itself up as moral in that it seeks to remedy unequal educational outcomes, and this is a worthy goal of legislation, it renders all other criticism as immoral or of only personal, that is, selfish significance. I call this policy environment morally-constrained because only one version of what counts as moral is valued or entertained. Within this logic, criticism by teachers is cast as immoral or self-serving. It may be construed as either unsupportive of the stated equity goals of pedagogical policies such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top or as personal resistance to change and growth. Both imputed stances leave teachers with little moral ground from which to articulate and defend their concerns about the profession, particularly when teachers lose moral credibility in this logic whenever they engage in criticism of pedagogical policy.

As a feminized profession and a form of reproductive labor, moral madness threatens men and women who teach, although the likelihood remains that men may still be seen as more "rational"

¹³Diamond and Allcorn.

and hence more morally credible than women teachers. Like Cassandra, teachers may try to issue moral warnings that are not heeded due to their feminized subject positions. I am concerned with the ways in which teachers' moral concerns are not heard as moral, other-regarding or interested in a good beyond self-satisfaction. One need only look at the public criticisms of teachers who attempt to make moral claims about teachers through labor action to see the ways all of these terms are operationalized.¹⁴ For instance, Dana Goldstein describes various education reforms as responding to "moral panics" about teachers. John Kuhn documents public discourse that characterizes public school teachers as selfish, greedy and villainous. Teachers who express moral concerns about their work may be cast as selfish, resistant or lazy (or all of the above); these are characteristics of a "bad teacher."

Educational researcher Kevin Kumashiro argues that "the strict-father family model has been used to regulate the teaching profession in American schools" and now, he explains, the model frames education reform, not only the individuals expected to enact it.¹⁵ The prevailing discourse of "bad teachers" relies on morally discrediting teachers. In particular, a narrow band of what stands for good or moral commitment in teaching occupies discourse on teaching. Teachers are good if they follow the orders of their superiors, agree to the aims of education set by market-based reformers and place the well-being of their students above their own health, families and professional satisfaction.

The title of Kumashiro's book *Bad Teacher* conveys gender content. The charge "bad teacher" functions as a disciplinary tactic. Like "bad girl", "bad teacher" implies that an ideal has been transgressed and that that ideal requires further policing. This ideal is gendered and the reproach is intended to invoke shame.¹⁶ In the same way that it is impossible for any one person to embody all of the contradictions inherent in the fantasy of the "good girl," it is impossible for any individual to meet the impossible demands of the fantasy of the "good teacher." Being a good girl is not only about accumulating external qualities and exhibiting particular behaviors. The good girl ideal upholds cultural beliefs and norms that preserve gendered power arrangements. The charge "bad girl" addresses not only the transgressor's behavior, but her being. Likewise, invoking "bad teacher" raises the question of the moral credibility and subjectivity of the teacher, not just the behaviors in question.

Teachers may experience and express shame, but not for transgressing the wishes of the strict-father policies that call for rigor, standards and high-stakes standardized testing and purport to remove the feminine softness and judgment that have been the downfall of U.S. education. Rather, my research reveals that teachers express shame when they are asked to enact policies

¹⁴ Kevin K. Kumashiro. *Bad Teacher: How Blaming Teachers Distorts the Bigger Picture* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2012). See also Dana Goldstein, *The Teacher Wars: A History of America's Most Embattled Profession* (New York: Doubleday, 2014); John Kuhn, *Fear and Learning in America: Bad Data, Good Teachers and the Attack on Public Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2014). Goldstein describes various education reforms as responding to "moral panics" about teachers. Kuhn documents public discourse that characterizes public school teachers as selfish, greedy and villainous. The teacher's perspective on and analysis of the demand for rule-following can be found in Rebecca Noël Smith's, "The Moral Oppression of the Teaching Profession: Learning to Transcend," Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Central Florida (2013).

¹⁵ Kumashiro, 32-33.

¹⁶ See Ahmed.

and practices that run counter to what they believe good teaching entails.¹⁷ They express frustration when their moral concerns are disregarded and recast as immoral because they do not land in the category of good teaching within the narrow definitions offered by market-based reformers.

While an ethic of care might seem to serve as an antidote to this narrowly-focused articulation of good teaching, I believe that “caring” is no longer a sufficient ethic for teachers in this policy climate. The caring that teachers may serve as teachers’ ethical orientation towards their work has been coopted. In the logic of market-based reform, the strict-father prevails and demands total obedience, or what teachers will recognize as the requirement for “fidelity.”¹⁸ While fidelity in a broad sense would involve faith which would determine one’s direction, the use of the term fidelity in teaching now entails unquestioning obedience. Caring means that teachers do as the strict-father says since he knows better than you. In this context, caring, like in an abusive relationship, means the eradication of self in the form of suspension of other guiding ideals. In this binarized moral environment where questioning policies and practices leads to the label “bad teacher,” teachers need a way out of the logic of the strict-father who says, if you care (for students, for public education, for your profession), you will do as I say. Although the ethic of care articulated by Nel Noddings and taken up by others is not responsible for this state of affairs, it does not provide a way out of the madness.¹⁹

Cassandra’s feminine of form madness

The prophetess Cassandra serves as an archetype of the feminine voice whose moral claims are not heard or heeded by others. Although many prophets in Greek mythology face disbelief, Cassandra’s passionate responses to the peril she foresees are treated as a form of madness. As she attempts to warn those around her about the terror that will the house of Agamemnon, her despair and wailing serve as justification that she should be ignored and dismissed. Feminist philosopher Pascale-Anne Brault notes the distinct problem of voice faced by Cassandra in Aeschylus’ account of her prophecy. She explains, “Cassandra seems to have access to the future, but unlike her male counterparts, her voice is inarticulate and unheard by those around her, at the limits of human reason.”²⁰ It is not only that her vision is disputed, her very language is incomprehensible to those around her.

Cassandra is regarded as madwoman. Her prophecies place her outside of reason because she presents them not only as a woman, but with emotion and passion. She, “speaks not simply with her mind but with her body, with shrieks and cries, her utterances are taken to be madness, even hysteria.”²¹ Cassandra serves as the classical figure of hysteria – a condition reserved for

¹⁷ Doris A. Santoro, “‘I Was Becoming Increasingly Uneasy about the Profession and What Was Being Asked of Me’: Preserving Integrity in Teaching,” *Curriculum Inquiry* 43 (5), 2013: 563-587.

¹⁸ Doris A. Santoro, “‘We’re Not Going To Do That Because It’s Not Right’: Using Pedagogical Responsibility To Reframe the Doublespeak of Fidelity,” *Educational Theory* 66 (1-2), 263-277.

¹⁹ Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1984).

²⁰ Pascale-Anne Brault, Playing the Cassandra: Prophecies of the Feminine in the *Polis* and Beyond. In *Beyond the City: Greek Tragedy, Sexual Difference, and the Formation of the Polis*, eds. Denise Eileen McCoskey & Emily Zakin (Albany, NY: Suny Press, 2009), 197-220, p. 198.

²¹ Brault, p. 198.

women, a feminine form of madness. Although hysteria once served as an actual diagnosis for women who did not assent passively to the limited social roles they were offered, it now operates as a dismissive slur. Hysteria suggests that both what a woman finds objectionable is in fact not problematic at all and that her reaction to the problem is outsized. The label of hysteria undermines women's attempts to exercise voice as well as their claims to knowledge. Despite Cassandra's attempt to prevent great harm through her warnings, she is ignored and the men in the vicinity attempt to silence her. She is not listened to nor believed. Despite her attempts to give voice to the tragedy on the horizon, she is unable to intervene upon Agamemnon's impending murder; her lack of voice and lack of credibility may be what drive her mad.

Psychoanalyst Melanie Klein argues that Cassandra's attempts to be heard are not just into order to convey what she can see, but that she acts as the superego of Agamemnon's house. In Klein's reading, Cassandra's prophesies are not general visions of the future. Cassandra's cries and shrieks are *moral* warnings.²² She tries to prevent wrongdoing and harm. She uses her privileged perspective to intervene upon death, destruction and violence. Perhaps her language is not understood because she is a foreigner, perhaps her cries are read as personal appeals as Agamemnon's captive or perhaps her warnings are simply disregarded because she is a woman and her foresight is doubted.

Cassandra's wailing and shrieking, I argue, may be the *result* of her prophesy being ignored rather than the *reason* that her warnings are disregarded. The reception of Cassandra's moral warnings are ignored and viewed as madness by the men in her vicinity. However, I suggest that it is the failure of these men to recognize her moral agency and moral voice that catalyzes her madness.

Moral madness is an effect of when the content of one's claims or actions are not recognized as moral *and* when one is disregarded as a moral agent. The cycle is vicious in that a person issuing a moral warning may become exercised, confused or frustrated because their claims are not recognized. These affective responses to being disregarded may then be cited as evidence for why one should not be recognized as possessing moral credibility.

Monica's madness

The case of Monica shows the ways that moral madness arises when a teacher's moral voice is not heard and her moral integrity is undermined. Monica has taught in a public middle school in an affluent suburb of a major city on the East Coast of the United States for 14 years. Prior to entering teaching, she earned her doctorate at an Ivy-league university in a male-dominated discipline. She works with a population that many might assume to be least affected by market-based reforms that have focused on urban and under-resourced schools where students have difficulty achieving state benchmarks for success. Yet, even while working in conditions that could be considered enviable by many and with a background and credentials that provide her with exceptional resources for analysis and self-expression, Monica felt as though she were going mad.

²² Melanie Klein, "Some Reflections on 'The Oresteia'" in *Envy and Gratitude & Other Works 1946-1963* (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1975), 294.

In 2014-15, the superintendent introduced a plan to reorganize the schools based on an instructional intervention model. Teachers, including Monica, wanted to know more about the impetus for this reorganization, discuss the merits of the reorganization and understand how the reorganization would fit with the district's priorities. The previous academic year the district priorities had been set by an appointed group of stakeholders and had won broad approval across the district. The priorities were: fostering creativity, supporting inquiry and building on students' strengths.

Rollouts of the reorganization provided no opportunities for this highly educated group of teachers (many have masters and some also have doctorates) to discuss the proposed practices. For instance, one consultant spoke at a teachers' assembly and presented an equation ($\text{Student Learning} = \text{Time} + \text{Instruction}$) that suggested that the district would guarantee learning for all students. The oversimplified account of student learning stunned Monica, someone who is well-read in educational research, as facile and inaccurate. Handouts with "FAQs" anticipated teachers' questions and provided answers. Each response to pre-established questions showed how the practices are necessary in order to ensure student success. In this moral binarization, the discourse is manipulated so that any teacher who questions the practices appears immoral, or at least, against the goal of student success. Monica describes the strategies of the school leaders as performing multiple inversions that leave teachers voiceless. She says,

the administrators in my district are working hard to make it look like there is buy-in and input regarding their decisions, even as they make it impossible for teachers to speak. They arrogantly claim a moral high ground by insisting that they are leading us on a path to help struggling students learn, and if we try to even ask questions, then we are against equity and justice.

Monica's experience of failing to have her voice recognized comes from two sources. The first is that there is an illusion that the voices of teachers have been included in decision-making and the second is that teachers' moral credibility is undermined in the act of questioning. Monica's attempt to engage in moral discourse by asking questions out of concern for the well-being of students, the school and her profession made her morally suspect.

Monica explains her frustration when having no ground from which to articulate a moral concern. She says,

They coopt the conversation, so you read that [the FAQ], and then you see that you can't challenge it because it sounds like you are then against the idea that all children deserve to learn. They've stolen the conversation and made it about morality in a way. The morality of 'we have a problem in our district, our district data indicate that we have gaps in learning outcomes and that all of our students do not learn what we believe to be essential.' So you cannot question this.

In this system, if teachers are "good," then they must care about the district data; the district data, according to district and school leadership, determines how good teachers must care. Furthermore, the district's data is held up to be the only data of value or relevance. In this totalizing logic, good teachers must follow unquestioningly the directives of the strict-father. Monica continues, "And you can't ask questions because you are like questioning the morality of

something that no one could disagree with. To ask a question is to challenge it and to challenge it is to be against it.”

One effect of the market-based reforms is to winnow the scope of the purpose of education and the moral ground from which to stand. Morgan explains that moral madness sets in when previously honored virtues are now vices.²³ She describes her experiences as a kind of madness, “It is a crazy-making environment for teachers who are using our intelligent minds to think critically and who care deeply about the integrity of our work as teachers.” As a highly-educated and well-prepared teacher, Monica believed that her intellect, her ability to question and her concern for students were assets sought after by the district in which she was hired. However, these “virtues” that include critical thinking, extensive background knowledge and professional expertise all have become liabilities or “vices” in the last 5 years of her work. Monica reflects, “I used to feel heard as a teacher and recognized and valued and I don’t feel heard, recognized or valued now.”

The discursive territory available to engage in discussions about the worth of policies and practices has narrowed dramatically and has altered the value of qualities previously considered assets. However, more insidious is the illusion of being able to provide input or to have a voice. While Monica mentioned times where her feedback was solicited and then ignored or not heeded, an experience familiar to most work environments, she described the *illusion* of voice as “crazy-making.” Documents such as the FAQ about the intervention program ventriloquize teachers’ concerns. There is no recognition of Monica’s actual moral voice; the moral voice has been articulated for her, presented as the equivalent of thought bubbles filled in by the educational consulting firm.²⁴

As Houston describes, Monica encounters a situation in which her professional responsibility outstrips her power. Monica describes how teachers are required to meet with each other to discuss learning objectives. The scope of the discussion is so tightly circumscribed that the terms of the conversation are already pre-ordained and there is no space to engage in questions regarding the meaning or value of the objectives themselves. Yet, these very meetings are then used as evidence that teachers are provided with ample opportunities to provide input on school matters.

With Monica, we have an example of a teacher who by all accounts has the background, credibility and capacity to make herself heard and understood. While her frustration alone might be grounds for others to tell her to calm down and not be so “hysterical,” she describes herself as going mad because as she is trying to fulfill her charge as a good teacher, but is reminded to stay in her place – to care for students in the way that the leadership has deemed most appropriate, even if she wants to alert how those methods might be harmful.

Monica explains the effect these practices have had on her:

²³ Morgan, 214.

²⁴ The practice of anticipating teachers’ concerns about market-based reforms and inserting a moral imperative is ubiquitous. See Derek Gottlieb, *Education Reform and the Concept of Good Teaching* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

It's very manipulative. It can make you feel crazy, like you are losing your mind ... It's kind of like being in a dysfunctional family where it's like why aren't you happy? ... It's like a child being given very hypocritical mixed messages and they believe it, like you ... It's hard to articulate why it's so crazy-making. It's because you're not being listened to, but because it's really hard to hold in your mind this criticism [of the policy or practice], this other way of thinking, when you are in this system. And you sort of feel, you know that something's not quite right, it's hard to articulate it. Even though I went to an elite liberal arts college, I have a doctorate, I read good stuff, I ... I actually kind of forgot that learning's not an equation. Like, I lose the language and then I don't know what's wrong with me, why am I so frustrated?

Monica describes the feeling of going mad. She connects her sense of "losing her mind" to infantilization, to living as the least powerful member of a dysfunctional family. Likewise, she notes how she "loses her mind" in that she forgets what she takes to be essential about teaching and learning in the process of being initiated into a new discursive domain.

In this description, Monica presents a situation that goes beyond Kumashiro's strict-father figure. More than simply demanding obedience, the leadership in this district places teachers in a moral bind where teachers' voices are elicited, but constrained and ventriloquized. If teachers' concerns exceed the constrained terms of the discussion, they may be viewed as committing a professional transgression. For instance, many teachers would say that to lack a belief in a child's ability to learn or to lack a commitment for all students' desert is a breach of professional ethics. Teachers who question market-based reform efforts may be so accused, and may even be labeled mad for questioning policies presumably based in principles of equity. Monica, like Cassandra, is not understood and experiences a loss of language accompanying her frustration of not being heard.

Moral madness and moral voice

I have shown that moral madness may arise from three strategies of moral violence. The first comes from Morgan's original formulation. Vices are turned into virtues and virtues are turned into vices. For teachers who include in their professional obligations speak up when they see harm or wrongdoing coming to their students, their school or their profession, are confused when they find that they are vilified for doing so. Monica, for instance, found the vice of shutting down intellectually and morally is now valued in her district.

The second strategy of moral violence is highlighted in Houston's amendment to Morgan. When individuals are given responsibilities that they do not have the power to uphold or they are not given an opportunity to question the terms of that responsibility, they can go mad. Monica felt as though she were going mad because she was told it was her moral responsibility to enact an intervention program. Yet, with this directive she was given no opportunity to ask questions about its premises or effects on students and the district. Moral violence of this type also occurs when those in power ventriloquize the moral concerns of teachers by showing all the ways in

which teachers' moral concerns have been presupposed and addressed, leaving no space for off-the-menu moral discourse.

Care, within the scope of this second strategy, no longer means engaged discernment and attunement to the other. The injunction to care does not mean that teachers should bring their professional judgment to bear on educational matters. Rather, the command to care, in this sense, reduces teachers to agents who reproduce others' instructions. These instructions may or may not be rooted in knowledge of students, the community, the curriculum, or pedagogy.

Finally, I add a third strategy that may contribute to moral madness: the rejection of teachers' moral claims and concerns as moral, or other-regarding. I believe this is the strongest form of moral violence, in that it involves the erasure or dismissal of the moral subjectivity of another. The madness Monica and others I have interviewed describe comes from the failure to be recognized as a moral agent, even when attempting to act morally.

All three strategies rely on a set of beliefs that render the feminine, and those who occupy feminine subject positions, morally suspect and unreliable. When teachers are labeled Cassandras due to their shrieking and wailing, they may be dismissed as hysterical; their warnings may be disregarded as the hallucinations of a person who is mad. Yet, like Cassandra, they may be able to see the future.