



# “Heartbreaking and Continuously Frustrating”: An Ethnodramatic Exploration of Teacher Demoralization

**Amanda Brown**

PhD Candidate, Arts in Education  
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction  
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities  
[brow5954@umn.edu](mailto:brow5954@umn.edu)




# Opening Monologue

Jared and I, or Why how I came to this project.



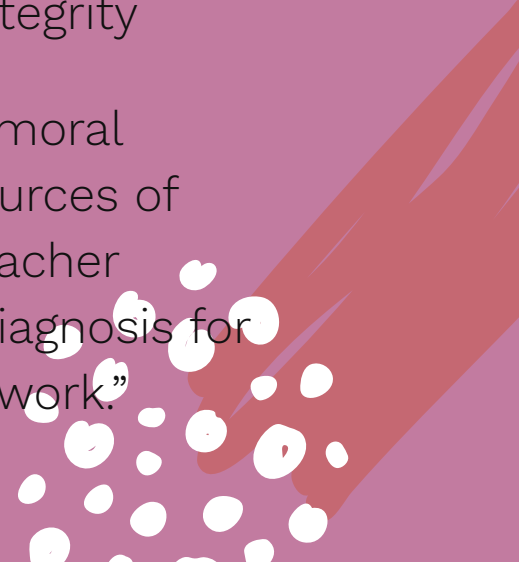


# Why this project?

- Coming out of terrible experience teaching the past few years, sought to make sense of my experience both by looking for theories to explain it and by looking for other teachers with common experiences.
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# My Answer: Teacher Demoralization

- Educational Philosopher Doris A. Santoro writes extensively about her theory of **teacher demoralization** vs burn-out
    - Teachers not tired/stress; rather feeling their integrity threatened and basic beliefs violated
    - “Teachers’ dissatisfaction may also stem from moral concerns. And only by addressing the moral sources of teachers’ anguish might we stem the tide of teacher exodus. Demoralization is the more accurate diagnosis for teachers who find they can no longer do good work.”  
(Santoro, 2019)
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# Area of Focus

- Exploring the experience of teacher demoralization, dramatically (Saldaña, 2003; 2011), capturing multiple ways demoralization can look and how it impacts teacher experience and career decisions
  - Research Question: What is the experience of teachers in a school environment pushing them towards demoralization? How does this experience impact their pedagogies, motivation, mindsets, and career decisions?
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# Epistemology and Methodology

My work is an exploration of the phenomenon that occurs frequently in education: the demoralization of teachers (Santoro, 2011; 2019)

I approached this work from a **phenomenological** and **narrative** perspective.






# Methods

- Semi-structured interview of 4 teachers
    - All with over 5 years experience at at least 2 school sites
  - Mining of my own experiences of demoralization through journals, reflections, discussions with friends/family
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# Analysis

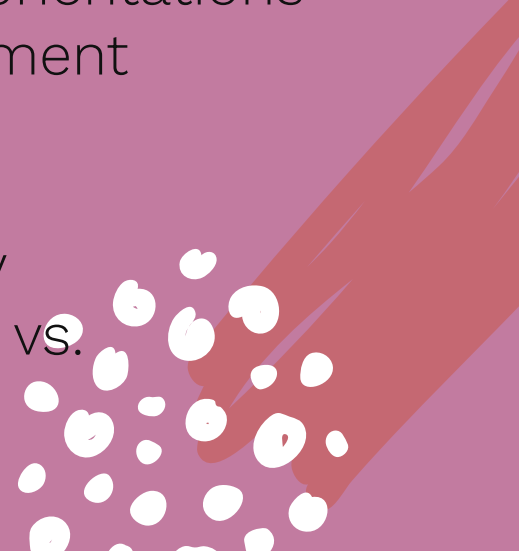
- Analyze for common themes
  - Organize interview excerpts into thematic monologues
  - Splice monologues together into scenes around thematic topics to explore resonances and dissonances in experiences
  - At draft stage, sharing with participants for checks/feedback
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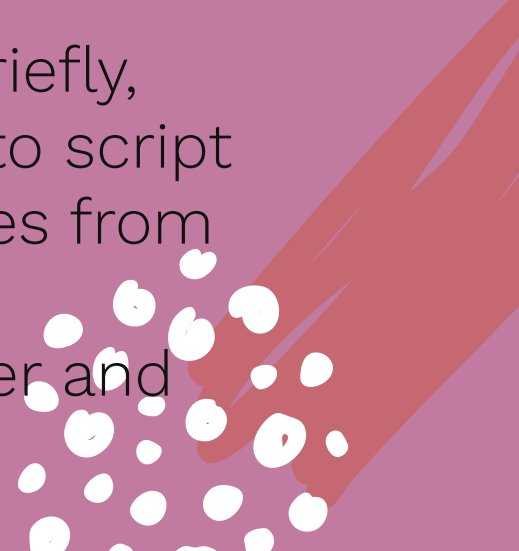
# Themes Emerging



- Clear vision for classrooms - rooted in deep pedagogical beliefs and social justice orientations
  - Period of adjustment/learning environment
  - Seeking out like-minded colleagues
  - Pushing for change on a school level
  - Slow demoralization / feeling of futility
  - Wrestling with decision to leave - guilt vs. self-preservation
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# Representing Inquiry

- Presenting in an Ethnodrama (script and performance)
  - Open with introduction - lay out, briefly, above information as introduction to script
  - Script contains only verbatim quotes from interviews
  - Performance either Readers' Theater and full production
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# Hope for Work

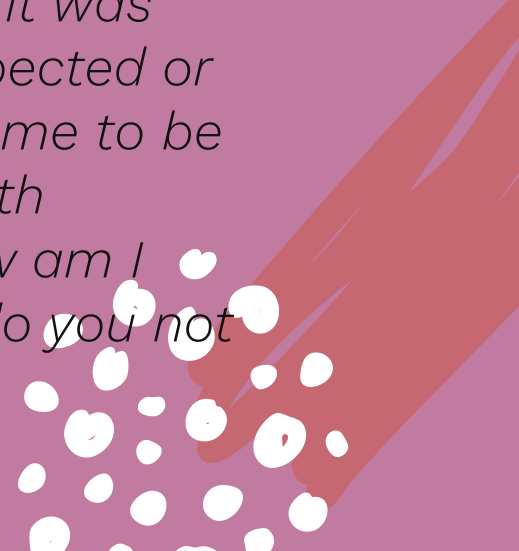
- Build community for teachers experiencing demoralization
  - Build empathy among those who support teachers
  - Push for changes above individual teacher level
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# Monologue Excerpts

Jenna - Teacher at Midwestern Charter School

*“It just felt like I was sitting in those meetings, and it was going against everything that anyone I've ever respected or valued, or knows anything about math has taught me to be true. It feels like when you're like trying to argue with someone who, like, won't look at facts. It's like, How am I supposed to convince you to believe in this? How do you not already....Why am I even having this conversation?”*



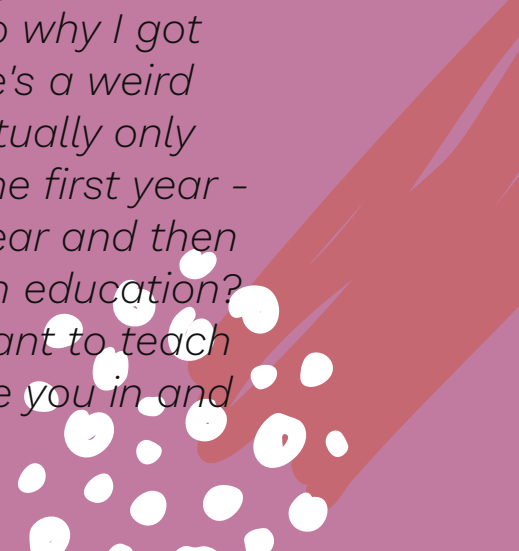


# Monologue Excerpts



Maggie - Teacher at Western All-Girls STEM School

*It's just exhausting. You know, I want to be able to work in a place where I feel like all kids are cared about and have access to opportunities, and I don't think that's happening at my school, and that's like a really awful, horrible thing to feel a part of like, because it's so antithetical to why I got into teaching, which was to like, provide more access, and there's a weird way I feel like we've created this public-private school that's actually only benefiting a certain group of students. I think every year after the first year - the first year was really lovely. But since my second and third year and then now in my fourth year, it makes me question, do I want to say In education? Like is it actually that I don't want to be a teacher? Or I don't want to teach at this school? But then the kids are so awesome that they rope you in and make you stay.*






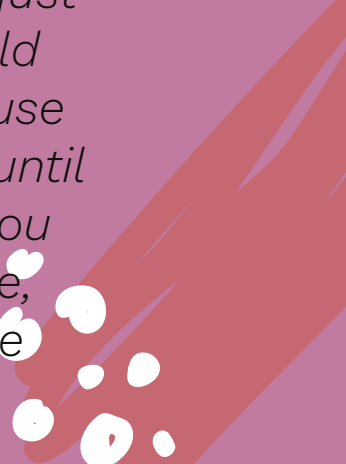

# Monologue Excerpts



Vanessa - Teacher at Small Western Charter



*It felt like we weren't moving forward. Like, we would roll out initiatives and nothing would happen. We would talk about trying this thing and nothing would happen. Our staff meetings would just be everyone bitching at each other for an hour and nothing would happen. It just felt like nothing was gonna change. And so because of that, it made a lot of us feel like, we're just gonna stick it out until retirement, doing the best we can, and that just kind of makes you not feel as excited to like, try shit and. I'd show up, and you're like, what am I going to do today? The same thing I did yesterday, the same thing I did before that.*







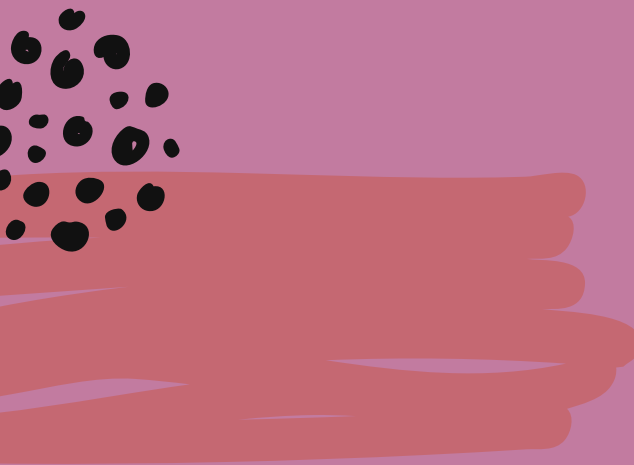
# Monologue Excerpts



Kristin - Teacher at large comprehensive HS in California

*What did it feel like? I do know that that [I] made an impact, but it's just, it's so hard at the time to see that; you feel like a lot of it is not very productive. Heartbreaking is probably....Heartbreaking. Frustrating too, because like, things will happen and kids will be upset about it, but then like, what am I gonna do? Like, I can't do anything about it. I can't do anything about the fact that the science teacher is yelling "fuck you" to the kid over there. What am I gonna do about that? I can tell them to stop and then they're just gonna cuss at me in front of kids...*





**Thank you!**



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