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Creating Rhetorical Subjectivities: Negotiating the Precarity of the Homo Oeconomicus in the Neoliberal Workplace

Abstract

The ubiquitous impact of the neoliberal economy on our everyday life leads to questions of rhetorical significance. This project strives to incorporate service labor experience as a source as well as an effect of rhetoric thereby embodying materialist notions of the body at the site of production. I explore neoliberal discourses through the phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring by interviewing service industry employees that have experienced job uncertainty within a Fortune 500 corporation. By studying narratives, this project explores how the material effects of rhetoric are able to determine discourses of power relating to production. Thus, this study questions the persuasive element of being a worker within the precarious and the flexible workspace. It also contends that rhetoric in this regard incorporates material effects upon the body of the worker. In essence, the materialist embodiment of neoliberal's immanence lies within rhetoric.

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Creating Rhetorical Subjectivities: Negotiating the Precarity of the *Homo Oeconomicus*
in the Neoliberal Workplace

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Leslie Lynne Rossman
November 2016
Advisor: Dr. Josh Hanan

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Title: Creating Rhetorical Subjectivities: Negotiating the Precarity of the *Homo Oeconomicus* in the Neoliberal Workplace
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The ubiquitous impact of the neoliberal economy on our everyday life leads to questions of rhetorical significance. This project strives to incorporate service labor experience as a source as well as an effect of rhetoric thereby embodying materialist notions of the body at the site of production. I explore neoliberal discourses through the phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring by interviewing service industry employees that have experienced job uncertainty within a Fortune 500 corporation. By studying narratives, this project explores how the material effects of rhetoric are able to determine discourses of power relating to production. Thus, this study questions the persuasive element of being a worker within the precarious and the flexible workspace. It also contends that rhetoric in this regard incorporates material effects upon the body of the worker. In essence, the materialist embodiment of neoliberal's immanence lies within rhetoric.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| CHAPTER ONE | 1 |
| Context of Neoliberalism..... | 6 |
| The Rhetorical Consequences of Neoliberalism: Statement of the Problem..... | 9 |
| Theorizing the Rhetorical Problematic in Political Economy: From Marx to Foucault..... | 14 |
| Marxist Theory of Political Economy..... | 15 |
| Foucault’s Theory of Political Economy | 19 |
| The Rhetorical Problematic | 26 |
| Methodology | 28 |
| Materialist Rhetoric | 29 |
| Critical Organizational Discourse..... | 30 |
| Chapters Overview..... | 34 |
| Conclusion | 35 |
| CHAPTER TWO | 36 |
| Objective of Proposed Research Study..... | 38 |
| Research Questions..... | 39 |
| Interview Method..... | 40 |
| Participants..... | 42 |
| Discursive Practice: Re-telling the Power of the Conduct of Conduct in the Workplace | 53 |
| Discursive power in organizations..... | 55 |
| Conclusion | 65 |
| CHAPTER THREE: OUTSOURCING | 68 |
| Interview Themes..... | 76 |
| Outsourcing Overview | 77 |
| Outsourcing Interview Data..... | 79 |
| Conclusion | 115 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: OFFSHORING | 118 |
| Interview Themes..... | 130 |
| Offshoring Overview | 131 |
| Offshoring Interview Data | 133 |
| Conclusion | 173 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION | 176 |
| The Rhetorical Consequences of Neoliberalism..... | 178 |
| The Case Study: Outsourcing and Offshoring..... | 181 |
| Implications..... | 185 |
| Future Directions | 190 |
| Conclusion | 192 |
| REFERENCES | 195 |

CHAPTER ONE

In the 2016 Presidential election, both Donald Trump and Secretary Hillary Clinton have debated the merit of offshoring labor to the developing world at various campaign stops. During the primary election season Trump spoke passionately about keeping manufacturing jobs within the United States while simultaneously offshoring many of his production lines to the developing world (*PBS, 2016*). On the other hand, Secretary Clinton began her career in the U.S. senate as a staunch opponent to offshoring labor to promote it five years later in India as Secretary of State, which she also concluded that they type of trade creates positives and negatives for the American worker (*International Business Times, 2016*). Since these statements Clinton has gone back to her earlier stance on challenging offshoring as stated within the jobs and wages tab on her campaign website. A similar tune was sung in the 2012 presidential election when Governor Romney called for greater prosperity by bringing back manufacturing to the United States while dismissing the eradication of tax cuts to companies that actively outsource and offshore their labor. On the other side of the issue, President Obama argued for the limitations of corporate tax cuts for those firms that offshore labor. While each presidential candidate made the subject of job loss into a central argument of the campaign neither one addressed the very real consequences of outsourcing and

outsourcing on the labor force that is directly impacted by job loss. Furthermore, after being elected, President Obama was unable to follow through with his campaign promises to limit corporate offshoring. At this point, within the political landscape, there are many things that both Republicans and Democrats can disagree upon, however one point of agreement seems to center on making the prospect of offshoring and outsourcing attractive to multinational corporations (*USA Today*, 2012). The question remains, will either one of the presidential candidates change the way the U.S. exploits developing nations for their skilled and cheaper labor sources? Basing my conclusion off of the continuing job insecurity and international trade policies that reward corporations for trading labor as commodities, the answer is no.

Beginning with President Clinton's signing of the North American Free Trade agreement (NAFTA) in the 1994 and the subsequent Central American Free Trade agreement (CAFTA) enacted by President Bush in 2005, free trade zones and tax credits have made a once fixed labor site into a flexible and moving office exploiting developing nations for low cost labor. As unemployment keeps steady at 7.5% a steep drop from 9.9% at the pinnacle of the Great Recession in 2009 (United States Department of Labor, 2013), it still remains that many Americans are unemployed and underemployed due to the lack of jobs. However, voices of unemployed and workers facing the prospect of losing their job due to downsizing or outsourcing and offshoring seem to be silenced within the discourse of neoliberalism. This project takes a unique look at the economics of offshoring and outsourcing labor from both a micro and macro rhetorical perspective by considering how particular organizations and neoliberal political economy—more broadly—rely on normative values to generate profit and revenue. More specifically, my

project is interested in how neoliberal discourses work to discipline bodies into laborers that produce and reproduce value.

This dissertation questions the material effects of rhetoric in the production of a service and within discourses surrounding outsourcing and offshoring, particularly, by asking how neoliberal discourses shape understanding and performances of work, specifically, when faced with job uncertainty due to offshoring or outsourcing. Moreover, it explores how discourses of neoliberalism--surrounding normative ideals of the *homo oeconomicus*—are negotiated when there is a possibility of outsourcing and offshoring.

Rhetoric within the scope of this project is defined using Cheney and McMillan's (1990) organizational rhetoric: "to characterize organizational rhetoric requires that we also consider the features of organizational life which involve or implicate persuasion. To conceptualize organizational rhetoric requires an understanding of collectively presented verbal discourse and visual images" (p. 100). They further their definition by explaining that organizational rhetoric plays a role in what we consider everyday life. Grounded in the classical definition of rhetoric as persuasive, the authors include another dimension of this definition, which incorporates organizations as persuasive entities. In other words, in today's contemporary rhetorical moment, organizations are involved in rhetoric through discourses emanating from, in-house public relations machines, marketing, and policies, as well as within the bodies of individuals that are affiliated with organizations. In fact, Cheney and McMillan (1990) argue that individuals are entrenched within organizations to the extent that many of their dialogues are tied back to persuasive elements of their organizational life (p. 94). Thus, within this research project I question the persuasive element of being a productive worker within the uncertainty of job loss. It also contends

that rhetoric in this regard incorporates material effects upon the body of the worker. Therefore, within this project organizational rhetoric is defined with expectations that the persuasive elements of organizational life (within the contemporary economy) influences workers to follow certain discourses when faced with uncertainty due to outsourcing and offshoring.

This phenomenon has real effects on how rhetoric is utilized to enforce hegemonic notions of what it is to be an American white-collar worker, and how biopolitical control of populations at the global level poses a rhetorical problematic of what it means to be a global citizen through production. Hence, my study of rhetoric within neoliberalism becomes vital to understand why service industry occupations are easily outsourced and offshored and how rhetoric is able to mediate the loss of jobs to lower paid labor. To examine how outsourcing is a technology of the neoliberal economy through biopolitics, I conducted interviews in the Licensing Department at a fortune 500 company detailing the way in which rhetoric has controlled labor populations within the phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring.

Building on these points, I situate my project in a growing field of work addressing the economic effects of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is the current economic system that informs the rationality of outsourcing and offshoring. Defining neoliberalism through Marxist and Foucauldian theories, this study is able to incorporate concepts of both theoretical vantage points in order to create a concise explanation of the normative discourses that perpetuate neoliberalism. Furthermore, it is important to analyze these discourses through a methodology that includes materialist and embodied notions of rhetoric.

Looking at the material effects of outsourcing and offshoring discourses through the narratives of service industry employees, allow for a micro exploration of neoliberalism's embodied values within a specific organization, while allowing for a macro explanation of neoliberalism through global division of labor. Rhetoric is then able to serve as a mediating link between discourse and the body.

This study explores the site of neoliberal discourse through the phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring by interviewing service industry employees that have experienced job uncertainty within the fortune 500 corporation. By studying narratives, this project is able to explore how the material effect of rhetoric as it is able to determine discourses of power relating to production. This chapter begins with the context of neoliberalism defined through a Marxist lens. Secondly, through a review of the literature, outsourcing and offshoring are defined as a result of neoliberalism. Thirdly, the theoretical and methodological approaches are explored through an intersectional approach to the problem of neoliberal discourse surrounding offshoring and outsourcing. Finally, I propose an analysis of outsourcing and offshoring via interview data.

Outsourcing and offshoring are concepts that create the some of the most salient labor issues attributed to globalization. According to *The Field Guide to the Global Economy*, “economic globalization consists of the flows of goods and services, capital, and people across national borders” (Anderson et. al., 2000, p. 5). Although offshoring and outsourcing are used simultaneously, they have very different and explicit meanings. Manning et al. (2008) defines both concepts as such, “offshoring refers to the process of sourcing and coordinating tasks and business functions across national borders. Outsourcing, by contrast, denotes the delivery of products or services by an external

provider-that is, one outside the boundaries of the firm” (p. 39). Within the Communication literature, little to no research has been done on this phenomenon. Therefore, it is increasingly important to investigate this phenomenon through organizational rhetoric. Beginning with the explanation of why outsourcing and offshoring is occurring, this project examines the context and the effects of neoliberalism on labor.

Context of Neoliberalism

The current economic system of neoliberalism produces various outcomes such as offshoring and outsourcing, and creates greater incorporation of globalization in order to increase the pool of labor. Moving from Harvey’s (2005) definition of neoliberalism to describing key moments of economic consequences on labor, this section is able to situate rhetoric within a site of mediation within neoliberalism and production of labor. David Harvey (2005) follows a distinct Marxist path when it comes to interpreting and analyzing the current economic market. He defines neoliberalism as follows:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that propose that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework to appropriate such practices. (p. 2)

In other words, neoliberalism (through a Marxist lens) reveals the exploitative nature of the free market within labor through its privileging of individual freedoms and property rights. Needless to say, there are several ways to interpret neoliberalism from an economic standpoint, including the Marxist critique. I argue that it is important to see the effects of neoliberalism from an exploitative vantage point and as a technology of power

facilitated from a Foucauldian theoretical perspective. Moreover, in order to put Marxist and Foucauldian articulations in conversation, we first must be able to see how neoliberalism as an economy of power functions to divide the labor force through state interventions and free market policies. I examine these effects of neoliberalism mainly through Harvey's (2005) definition.

Harvey analyzes the current economic hegemony of neoliberalism through historical materialism and class-consciousness, and within neoliberal policies that include individual rights, individual freedoms, free markets, and state interventions. These defined characteristics of neoliberalism affect both the public and private spheres by its influence on everyday life. In fact, neoliberalism has effectively transcended the role of the market economy in order to become a hegemonic way of life. Harvey (2005) writes:

“neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on the ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (p. 3).

In essence, neoliberalism has become much more than an economy in which markets thrive. It has become embedded in our everyday life to the extent that we are never able to operate outside the peripheral vision of the capitalist system.

Similar to Foucault's concept of biopolitics -a technology to control populations by governing apparatuses such as policies, agencies, and agents - Harvey (2005) acknowledges that neoliberalism has become “an ethic” of which induces all forms of life to the control of the market. The faith in the market has become a part of the American dream, in which anyone can become successful based upon the work that they put into his or her vision. It has also become a new form of colonialism, which has been enforced on

developing countries. Harvey calls this “the neoliberal state” or “a state apparatus” that has the ability to enforce neoliberal policies in order to procure a profit for western interests. Ong (2006) also views American neoliberalism as forced economic requirements imposed by the U.S. through capitalist imperialism and military action (p. 1). Ultimately, the neoliberal state is not limited to U.S. borders; it has spread to many economies throughout the world.

Neoliberalism, in its current state, can be thought of as a new technology of the government, a technology that incorporates rationalization through the market for society and self-governing as a rationalization through the individual body. Ong situates this phenomenon as a historical materialist problem by stating, “the spread of neoliberal calculation as a governing technology is thus a historical process that unevenly articulates situated political constellations” (2006, p. 3). In this metaphor, the United States is the creator of the universe where the constellation of neoliberalism resides. Unlike Hardt and Negri’s (2000) concept of a global labor regime, Ong (2006) contends that neoliberalism produces spaces of exceptions that allow for a hierarchy of labor practices. She states, “market rationality that promotes individualism and entrepreneurialism engenders debates about that norms of citizenship and the value of human life” (2006, p. 9). That is to say, with the push for individual freedoms and liberties, populations are fighting for more rights associated with personal identities and interests. Within the concept of exception, Ong (2006) concentrates on the effects of neoliberalism on developing countries. She states,

“rather than taking neoliberalism as a tidal wave of market-driven phenomena that sweeps from dominant countries to smaller ones, we could more fruitfully break neoliberalism down into various technologies: the kind of political exceptions that

permit sovereign practices and subjectifying technologies that deviate from the established norm” (Ong, 2006, p. 12).

This idea of governing technologies of neoliberalism leads to calculative techniques of governmentality that transcend both the social and the political through biopower. One of the defining effects of biopolitical control of populations occurs through the construction of labor especially in developing countries.

The Rhetorical Consequences of Neoliberalism: Statement of the Problem

The phenomena of offshoring and outsourcing provide rhetorical theory with a unique analysis of the contemporary moment of neoliberalism. Greene (2007) notes that one of the ways rhetoric can study political economy consists of analyzing specialized discourse production (p. 327). Approaching offshoring and outsourcing as a specialized discourse allows communication to deconstruct many angles of neoliberalism from the standpoint of labor. Therefore, the incorporation of communication in the area of political economy allows for a greater knowledge of neoliberalism from a rhetorical vantage point. Chaput (2010) agrees stating,

“to better understand the relationship between political economy and rhetoric in our contemporary world, we need to adapt our theories – ones as foundational as the rhetorical situation—to account for neoliberal rationalities governing the interrelatedness of politics, economic, and discourse” (pp. 3-4).

Indeed, Chaput (2010) similarly argues what Aune (1994) clearly states as an oversight of rhetorical possibilities from political economists, especially Marxists. There has been little to no scholarship on offshoring and outsourcing from a rhetorical lens. Therefore, it is imperative that the field of Communication adapts theory in order to account for neoliberal discourses of labor.

A number of scholars have linked neoliberalism to critical communication scholarship (Aune, 1994; Chaput 2010; Hanan, 2010 & 2013; Hardin, 2012; Greene, 2004, 2007; Venn 2009). Each one of these authors has been able to connect Communication to neoliberalism by examining discourses pertaining to individualism, communicative labor, policy, and through the contemporary fiscal situation. However, I connect neoliberalism and Communication theory through labor. Labor in this sense can be broken into two divisions of analysis, Marx's critique of capitalism and Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism. Both theorists never explicitly call for an incorporation of rhetoric in their examinations of the economy; however, it is always embedded within the material conditions that are produced by the market.

Within the past few years, Hardin (2012) writes that there has been a proliferation of articles addressing neoliberalism. Furthermore, she contends that the majority of scholarship falls into three categories, the Foucauldian camp, Marxist analysis, and the epochalist group, of which she is critiquing the desire to divide rhetoric into these spaces (Hardin, 2012, p. 9). She contends that these three sections are not exclusive; therefore, I merge both the Foucauldian and Marxist camps in order to create a conversation between class, labor, and governmentality within neoliberalism. Stemming from Harvey, Hardin defines neoliberalism in the Marxist strain as, "a hegemonic mode of discourse" (2012, p. 11). Thus, for Marxists, such as Harvey, neoliberalism poses as a dominant ideology, which accounts for class disparity and a circulation of power through the discourse of production. Within the dialogue that accounts for and perpetuates neoliberal ideologies, rhetoric is inevitably tied to neoliberalism. Stressing the need for a rhetoric to play a role within political economy Hanan (2013) builds the case for rhetorical exploration by

arguing that, “although since its beginnings, the criticism of economic rhetoric has flirted with the notion that economics is at its core irreducibly rhetorical” (p. 19). Building on Harvey’s notion that neoliberalism is a hegemonic mode of discourse and Hanan’s argument that economics is fundamentally rhetorical, I contend that Communication theory is inherently linked to the study of economics through production.

In the realm of economics, the persuasive means of policy and adherence to those policies is fundamentally rhetorical. This rhetorical influence of neoliberal policies becomes apparent when examining the workplace and the way in which bodies perform work. Therefore, in order to incorporate rhetoric in contemporary political economy, we must turn to communicative labor as the site of immaterial and production of discourses. Greene (2007) argues the rhetoric does indeed produce a materiality of labor within the concept of immaterial communicative labor. Chaput writes the following about the importance of communicative labor within biopolitics, “Foucault’s discussion of biopolitics, the episteme governed by neo-liberal rationality and empowered through technologies of security, provides important opportunities for theorizing rhetoric as a communicative labor within late capitalism” (2010, p. 5). She continues her argument further by suggesting that within this historical moment of neoliberalism, we are no longer fixed to a site of persuasion. In other words, it is very rare that the speaker/audience interactions are as dichotic as they once were within Fordism. The spaces of persuasion have become fluid between social realities and spaces (p. 6). Greene furthers this conversation by adding that, “...capitalism increasingly relies on the social dimensions of communication – control, deliberation, cooperation, competition, creativity – for the accumulation of capital and appropriation of social wealth” (Greene, 2007, p.

328). Communicative labor accounts for economic discourses in all aspects of life by creating an understanding of productive behaviors through market and social relations.

Through neoliberalism, production has moved from a fixed workplace or factory to a global migration of cheaper workplaces situated in free trade zones. Hanan (2010) writes:

neoliberalism's differences from Fordist-Keynesianism lay primarily in the realm of labor organization and expropriation. By promoting the lowering of international trade tariffs, neoliberalism encourages American corporations to seek labor internationally, diluting the value of labor (p. 181).

Hanan makes the distinction between neoliberalism of today's markets and capitalism of the past. Through Fordism, labor was fixed within a factory and by production. In addition, Keynesian policies allowed for state interventions within the markets through social security and welfare policies to secure a standard of living. However, within neoliberalism, labor is disjointed and fluid incurred through competitive ideology. In order to keep up with growing number of profits, labor costs must be kept to a minimum, and therefore, cheaper labor is ideal. Low cost labor sources are promoted through tax cuts, trade tariffs, and free trade zones. However, communication is one of the leading factors that facilitate a movement of labor to the cheapest source. Hanan (2010) notes that communication enables neoliberalism to transform labor spatially and temporally (pp. 181-182). The study of rhetoric within neoliberalism becomes vital to understanding the messages that are produced that ultimately define our everyday lives. It is also important to interrogate the justifications of labor exploitation specifically within domestic outsourcing and global offshoring. The current rhetorical condition is situated within the embedded nature of ideologies produced by the power of discourse circulating within the

neoliberal economy. Hence, since rhetoric is at the core of discourses of power it is imperative to study this phenomenon through a rhetorical lens.

This consequence of offshoring makes an increasingly poignant and political topic, one that positions itself in the area of communication. Mankiw and Swagle (2006) write, “just as with trade more broadly, communications efforts on outsourcing will inevitable involve a substantial defensive component” (p. 1055). While many companies conducting outsourcing efforts combat the negative communication with a positive spin on the potential economic gains, Kotabe et al. (2012) recognize the political repercussions of offshoring by making claim to the gains benefits and the negative loss associated with labor. Within the context of neoliberalism, globalized labor poses an interesting problematic for rhetoric. Harvey (2005) contends that the power of neoliberalism lies within discourse, while Hanan (2010) states that the economy is inherently rhetorical. Therefore, we cannot study the effects of labor within neoliberalism without incorporating the explanation of communication. Neoliberalism is able to fluidly expand through time and space via new and emerging communications and by enforcing exceptions. Ong notes that neoliberalism --as an exception--creates a unified governing technology that thrives on the techniques and notions of citizenship within rational choice of the market. This combination of neoliberalism and exception marks Ong’s incorporation of Foucault’s governmentality within her explanation of neoliberalism in the conduct of everyday life and within the domain of politics. Therefore, when incorporating an exception into the neoliberal economy rhetoric is able to coerce populations into acceptance of the new situation. Moreover, it has become more apparent, through communicative labor, that neoliberalism has affected our everyday lives through

the expansion and loss of labor sources by offshoring and outsourcing within globalization. Hence, it is time to start asking the question of how and why we embody the ideologies of neoliberalism.

Theorizing the Rhetorical Problematic in Political Economy: From Marx to Foucault

Marx and Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism create what Aune has determined to be a rhetorical problematic (Aune, 1994). This problematic has created two appendages of theoretical approaches to issues such as power. On one hand, Marxist scholars contend that the base\superstructure analysis is effective in determining the alienation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, Foucauldians oppose by stating that power is no longer divided within a dichotomy, that within the neoliberal epoch the base\superstructure dialectic has folded into a constant consumption and production cycle known as the active economic subject (Foucault, 2008). By using Marxist concepts of alienated labor and abstract labor (cost and time it takes to produce a commodity), Foucault is able to further these ideas and move them into the new problematic of neoliberalism. Whereas Marxists remain firmly grounded in modernism, Foucault is able to expand on the definition of Marx's labor theory as exploitation through buying and selling labor using wages. By developing a rhetorical approach to both Marxist theory and Foucault's philosophy of neoliberalism, labor can be analyzed through a conversation of these two theoretical approaches that develop a new rhetorical perspective to political economy.

Marxist Theory of Political Economy

Marxism has been studied as theory, method, and praxis of the political economy. Through Hegel, Marx expanded on many of his theoretical concepts including, historical materialism or the study of the production relations of a society and its historical implications, private property, the dialectical method, and alienation. Marx created a methodology from Hegel and applied it to the social relations brought on by capitalism. A central variable in Marxism comes from Hegel's idea of non-alienated labor. Marx took the idea of non-alienated labor and compared it to capitalism's inherent assembly of alienated labor. Marx believed that through the alienation of labor the proletariat is unable to realize their potentiality. He argues, within *The German Ideology*, that the nature of individuals depends on the material conditions determining their production and as a result, their realization of potentiality is greatly restricted. Moreover, because of the dominating class oppressing the proletariat, a crisis will emerge. The crisis consists of overproduction and underconsumption, and brings about an uprising of the proletariat or a revolution that consequently leads to socialism.

Marx argued that capitalism did not facilitate recognition of potentiality or human nature. Humans are producing animals--what Marx termed a *species being*--we produce and reproduce our existence and labor is a part of that production. Our production, in turn, is a means by which we survive. Furthermore, because this cycle is our means to exist, human nature is repressed; we are all just reflections of the world in which we live (McLellan, 2002, p. 177). He notes that under capitalism exploitation can be located in

the social and economic space between those who own the means of production and those who labor within the means of production to reproduce capital. He argues that socialism, where the proletariat owns the means of production and social class distinctions are eradicated, creates an ideal economy opposed to the perpetual exploitation and alienation of the proletariat by the elites. Therefore, alienation of labor creates a new reality of capitalist production and consumption.

Labor theory of value. Marx's surplus value incorporates the ideas of economics and the exploitations that occur within economics in the name of profits, which is a key concept in examining the phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring. There are many entities that make up Marx's labor theory of value including surplus value, use value, exchange value, wages, labor, labor power, and relative and absolute surplus value. This concept specifies that a commodity is a social relationship. The social relationship of labor has been turned into a commodity. Furthermore, the commodification of labor extinguishes the social relationship and becomes a product. There are two essential parts that make up this relationship including use value and exchange value.

Marx states that every commodity embodies use-value and exchange-value. He says, "a commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human want of some sort or another" (Marx as cited in McLellan, 2002, p. 458). Furthermore, a commodity is not a thing, it is a social relationship of exploitation. Through historical materialism, Marx is able to discover the usefulness of commodities in social relationships, which, in turn, signifies a use-value. Marx defines use-values as follows, "use-values are only produced by capitalists, because, and in so far as, they are the material substratum, the depositories of exchange-value" (Marx as cited in Trucker,

1972, p. 351). Use values are commodities in the sense that they are traded in the market for a profit. Moreover, use-values only become a reality or commodity of the market through consumption. The commodity that is contained in the use-value is sold through the relationship of the exchange-value, which also produces social relations attached to the consumption and production of the product.

Exchange-value is the power or worth of a commodity to be exchanged for another commodity. For example, a use-value and exchange-value circuit consists of C-M-C (commodity-money-commodity). Within the exchange process of the circuit, the exchange-value becomes power. Exchange value is the power of the thing to command all other things in exchange for itself. One of the examples that can be used for exchange value is the dollar. When you buy a product and exchange money in order to purchase that product, you are not only wielding monetary power, you are doing so within an exchange-value discourse. Furthermore, you are purchasing a product for its use-value while using the exchange-value to obtain it. We are using the power of money to command the product and are buying its perceived value; this is exchange-value. There is however a connecting factor that ties use-value to exchange-value, and to labor. There is an inherent exploitation of the worker situated in the relationship of use-value and exchange-value. This becomes more evident by deconstructing these concepts further through the labor theory of value.

The labor theory of value is the outcome that comes out of use and exchange value. Marx writes, “when commodities are exchanged, their exchange-value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use-values” (Marx as cited in McLellan, 2002, p. 460). Through the labor theory of value, labor power is the only real way that a

commodity can be measured. According to Marx, labor forms substance of value; for example, if the laboring time to make a commodity is cut in half, the commodity's worth is cut in half. The value of a commodity remains stagnant if the labor remains untouched. If the time and energy that the worker puts into the production of a commodity remains the same, the value will not change. However, a capitalist wants to cut labor time in half and, in turn, raise the value of the commodity. It is well known that to accumulate bigger profits, labor is the first cost that can be cut. Marx sees this phenomenon as the sale of labor power.

The theory of labor power incorporates the idea of buying and selling labor sources using wages. Marx explains that through the buying and selling of labor, labor is exploited to make profits. In other words, by buying and selling labor power, capitalism is able to exploit use-value by using the exchange-value. A wage is a price paid for labor's use-value but not for labor itself. The wage allows the capitalist to exploit labor because they are getting more productivity out of the labor than what they are paying for. For example, the capitalist will always get more value out of the worker than what they are paying for by asking for higher productivity, longer work hours, or cutting benefits. The wage, however, does not represent the worker's productivity; it represents the smallest amount of compensation that the proletariat needs to live on. Marx contends, "the value of labor power is the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of the laborer" (Marx as cited in McLellan, 2002, p. 491). Surplus value is the outcome of long workdays and low wages--or the exploitation of the worker.

The worker is earning the wage for his or her exchange-value of his or her labor. However, the wage is drastically lower than the actual output of labor. The emergence of

a longer workday is known as absolute surplus value. When the workday can no longer be stretched any further it is known as relative surplus. In addition to cutting benefits, technology has an outstanding capability to produce surplus value. With the use of technology, productivity has the potential to rise with less labor resources necessary. Along with the implementation of technology, the capitalist can require a stronger work ethic with a higher productivity rate. Thus, capitalism is a system that exploits labor in order to reproduce wealth for a small number of the general population. The exploitation of labor leads Marx to explain that capitalism is an unsustainable system that cannot be reformed and therefore must be destroyed. However, Foucault disagrees with Marx by incorporating the concept that power is always productive and will constantly be produced and re-produces in any economic and rhetorical organization.

Foucault's Theory of Political Economy

Foucault is able to rearticulate Marxist theory through his analysis of the reflexive and fluid body of the *homo oeconomicus*, or the economic man within his analysis of neoliberalism. Foucault (2010) defines the *homo oeconomicus* as an entrepreneur of him- or-her self, a self-producer, and the sovereign of his/her own body. In the same vein, the *homo oeconomicus* wins and loses on his/her own which makes him an incredibly self-reliant, individualistic, and competitive economic subject. In his genealogy on neoliberalism, Foucault began with its foundations in liberalism. Historicizing the origins of liberalism in his lectures at the College De France, Foucault examined the foundation of American neoliberalism. The key cornerstone to liberalism and neoliberalism began with the idea of limiting the state in the affairs of the economy. Foucault (2008) explains, “the question of the frugality of government is indeed the question of liberalism” (p. 29).

However, the incorporation of frugality into governmental apparatuses also spills over into the private sphere by inducing normative notions of frugality into self-policing actions of controlling the body. This invasion of our everyday conduct of the body is what Foucault terms governmentality. Within eighteenth-century liberalism, governmentality is able to transcend borders of power and incorporate an individual sovereignty in which one can control his or her own body in a state of checks and balances. According to Foucault, the technology of governmentality within liberalism allows for new interpretations of freedom. This freedom is, on one hand, implicated within the individualized body of rights and, on the other, is concerned with independence from the sovereign (Foucault, 2008, pp. 41-42). Both incorporations of freedom are deemed heterogeneous from one another; however, there is an axis point, which is contingent on individualizing the body.

In order to have freedom to /or freedom from, we must have a regulation source of governmentality. This source of regulation consists of the political economy. Hardin (2012) writes, “in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault et al. (2008) add two additional elements to his definition of liberal governmentality, the self-limitation of government and the market at the site of truth” (p. 7). Through the lenses of Marxism, these two concepts of liberalism could be considered dialectic; Foucault, however, problematizes this idea by incorporating them into a complete cycle power. Foucault no longer sees power in the same binary as Marx’s base/superstructure, but rather as a collapse of the binary into one fluid circulation of power, or what May (2015) has defined as immanent causality. Moreover, within liberalism freedom or truth is consumed through the economic market, which creates reality (Terranova, 2009, p. 243). Foucault contends that

liberalism is a governing practice that produces freedom based upon the self-reflexive nature of liberal markets. He contends, “the new governmental reason needs freedom therefore, the new art of government consumes freedom. It consumes freedom, which means that it must produce it. It must produce it, it must organize it” (Foucault, 2008, p. 63). The individualized notions of freedom and limitations of governance based upon the reason of the market begin within liberalism but take on an emerging embodied practice of the *homo oeconomicus* (the economic man) of neoliberalism’s application of biopolitics and continued governmentality. Foucault also extends Harvey’s (2005) definition of neoliberalism by creating nuanced explanations of the economic structure by incorporating concept of the economic man or *homo oeconomicus* and how he/she is controlled through biopolitical discourses of neoliberalism.

American neoliberalism. Foucault (2008) situates the genesis of American neoliberalism within the critique of the New Deal and overarching Keynesian policies (p. 216). Lemke (2001) argues that Foucault noted that the move from classical liberalism to contemporary neoliberalism rested on two points: the re-definition of the relation between the state and the economy, and the basis of government (p. 200). In other words, Foucault begins to articulate his theory of the economy by incorporating a new neoliberal adaptation of the state and the economy through assimilation of the market into all aspects of the social. Furthermore, Foucault is able to interpret how the government operates through technologies that perpetuate norms, which allow for a fluid merger of the economy within all aspects of life.

The state on the first case differs from liberalism to neoliberalism by letting the market convey the mode of governance. In other words, the market dictates the policies

of the state. In the second instance, there is a collapse between the market and the social. Neoliberalism breaks the binaries between the private/public and base/superstructure by imposing market rationality onto the body of the *homo oeconomicus*. Lemke (2001) writes,

“Neo-liberal thought has a central point of reference and support, namely *homo oeconomicus*. By encoding the social domain as a form of economic domain, cost-benefit calculations and market criteria can be applied to decision-making processes within the family, married life, professional life, etc” (p. 200).

In other words, neoliberalism seeks to turn all social and cultural practices into market forms that can be exploited and reappropriated as normative behaviors. Therefore, rationality of the market invades and intersects in all aspects of life by embodying the freedom and truth of the economy. Neoliberalism is then able to create a self-governing, entrepreneurial, economically minded individual or what Foucault calls the enterprise society. The population of this society is then able to be managed through the concept of biopolitics.

Biopolitics. By incorporating neoliberal values in all aspects of life, biopolitics is able to manage the *homo oeconomicus* through the truth of the market. Foucault expands upon the idea of biopolitics in *Security, Territory, Population*. In this early account he defines biopolitics as follows:

By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to be to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are species. (2007, p. 1)

Biopolitics consists of the idea of managing populations or making strategic choices based upon genetics to produce healthy populations. Lemke (2011) states that Foucault

uses this concept in three different ways throughout his work, as a historical rupture in political thinking and practice, as a source of racism, and as an art of government (p. 34). Expanding on the third meaning of biopolitics within the framework of neoliberalism, biopolitics directly connects to neoliberalism through governmentality. Along with controlling for the health of the population, biopolitics has great impact on pools of labor as living resources (Ong, 2006). Therefore, within the neoliberal economy, biopolitics accounts for an art of government that controls the health of populations in order to create the greatest potential for consumptive and productive behaviors.

Biopolitics found its foundations within eighteenth century classical liberalism as a way to center life within political and economic practices (Ong, 2006; Foucault, 2008; Dean, 2010; Lemke, 2011). Foucault mainly incorporated biopolitics within the health of a population, but linked it into human capital as a technique of governmentality. Similar to Marx's concepts of the labor theory of value and surplus value, Foucault grounds his analysis of biopower in the idea that populations or human capital are regulated by risks and securities based upon the truth of the market. Dean (2010), by situating his understanding of biopolitics from Foucault, understands this concept as an analysis of a liberal critique and frugal scale back of government. He states, "Bio-politics is a politics concerning the administration of life, particularly as it appears at the level of populations" (Dean, 2010, p. 188). Dean continues his definition of biopolitics by writing that this form of politics is concerned with life and death and the overall health of a particular population. Therefore, biopolitics becomes concerned with all aspects of life. Once again, there is a collapse between the base/superstructure and the public/private domain in favor of the art of government controlling populations in all aspects of life.

In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri (2000) recognized the social impacts of biopolitics within neoliberalism. They argue that the move from the disciplinary to control society allows for a self-reflexive and cyclical relations of power between the government, economy, population, and individual. They contend that biopower exists within a control society as opposed to the former disciplinary society as follows, “by contrast, when power becomes entirely biopolitical, the whole social body is comprised by power’s machine and developed in its virtuality” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 24). Neoliberalism is able to collapse the social and the political through the individual rationalization of the market and implementation of control onto the population. Biopolitics through governmentality is able to produce a population that embodies all aspects of neoliberalism into micro and macro levels of life. Marx was able to define this phenomenon through the real and formal subsumption of labor. Foucault is able to further this analysis by subjecting the social and political binary into one source of living labor, that of the *homo oeconomicus*.

Hardt and Negri (2000) see biopolitics as a deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the global world of capital. They contend that within the implementation of biopolitics, neoliberalism has “produced and reproduced social life itself, in which the economic, the political, and the cultural increasingly overlap and invest one another” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xiii). In addition, Hanan (2010) notes that, “in control societies capital has become so pervasive, both culturally (e.g., in the form of affective and immaterial labor) and materially (e.g., in the form of credit and finance), that surplus-value can be extracted from nearly every individual action” (p. 182). Indeed, through the incorporation of biopolitics, we have become individual machines and

collective populations of labor power. There is a continuous extract of surplus value through Marx's definition of living labor; however, Foucault has recognized its power as a circulatory imposition not originating hierarchically from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, but from the truth of the market to the normalization of every human being in order to create a productive citizenry. With the progress of classical liberalism to the contemporary neoliberalism, biopolitics has evolved into a "techne of governmentality" that relies on the truth of the market in order to create productive life.

The ubiquitous impact of biopolitics on our everyday life leads to questions of rhetorical significance. One cannot just accept the choice of freedom within the market without being in the immanent field of discourse. Lemke (2001) notes the discursive opportunities that rhetoric provides within calculative social realities. He writes, "on the one hand, the term pin-points specific form of representation; government defines a discursive field which exercising power is rationalized" (Lemke, 2001, p. 191). Within governmentality, Lemke calls for an analysis of arguments and justifications that the government uses in order to normalize reality (2001, p. 191). In this case, rhetoric plays a role in delineating and solving potential issues within the market. By acknowledging the inherent nature of rhetoric within the governing apparatus, critics are able to examine power of discourse as neoliberalism uses rationalized intervention to solve problems through the use of governmental technologies. Thus, discourse remains essential in maintaining the truth of the market within economic rationality that is ultimately constructed through rhetorical means.

The Rhetorical Problematic

James Arnt Aune (1994), in *Rhetoric and Marxism*, creates a space for rhetorical exploration within Marxist theory. He argues that within Marxist scholarship, rhetoric has been largely ignored. Therefore, Aune defines rhetoric as a mediator of class structure and class formation through discourse. Aune writes, “at the mode-of-production level, rhetoric as rules for the production of discourse mediates class structure and class formation” (1994, p. 49). For Marxists, rhetoric begins at the site of production as a mediator for social change. Using a Marxist framework, Aune (1994) sees rhetoric as the mediation between external material conditions such as the relations of production and forces of production. By using rhetorical methods to analyze Marxism, one has to ground the mediated outcomes within class. In other words, rhetoric serves as a mediator between the dialectic of base/superstructure within class, labor, and social productions. Nevertheless, as we have seen within Foucault’s conception of biopolitics, the bipolar model of Marx’s political analysis falls short when interpreting neoliberalism. However, Hanan (2013) sees this as an opportunity for a new direction of economic rhetoric (p. 14). The social and the political no longer occupy distinct discursive spaces of production and leisure, and rhetoric is now inherent in all aspects of being. All forms of life have become sites of production. Therefore, in order to incorporate rhetoric in contemporary political economy, we must turn to communicative labor as the site of material, immaterial, and production of discourses.

Unlike Aune’s inability to see rhetoric as a position of material production, Greene (2007) argues, rhetoric does indeed produce a materiality of labor within the

concept of immaterial communicative labor. Chaput writes the following about the importance of communicative labor within biopolitics, “Foucault’s discussion of biopolitics, the episteme governed by neo-liberal rationality and empowered through technologies of security, provides important opportunities for theorizing rhetoric as a communicative labor within late capitalism” (2010, p. 5). She continues her argument further by suggesting that within this historical moment of neoliberalism we are no longer fixed to a site of persuasion. In other words, it is very rare that the speaker/audience interactions are as dichotic as they once were within Fordism. The spaces of persuasion have become fluid between social realities and spaces (p. 6). Within neoliberalism, economies and social realities are no longer sites of false consciousness; rather, they are events of rhetorical negotiations of true and false (Foucault, 2008, p. 20). Therefore, we have to rethink Aune’s (1994) instance of critical rhetoric as a contradiction between structure and struggle (p.22) and turn to Greene’s (2007) argument for communicative capital (Greene, 2007). Greene furthers this conversation by adding that “capitalism increasingly relies on the social dimensions of communication – control, deliberation, cooperation, competition, creativity – for the accumulation of capital and appropriation of social wealth” (2007, Greene, p. 328). Communicative labor accounts for economic discourses in all aspects of life by creating an understanding of productive behaviors through market and social relations.

Greene emphasizes the need to destabilize a fixed labor site of exploitation in order to incorporate immaterial labor of contemporary neoliberal production (2004, p. 189). Immaterial work in this sense is living labor in the form of communication. Greene defines this communicative production as follows,

“the concept of communicative labor does not doom the rhetorical to always already serving the logic of capitalist accumulation; it describes how social wealth increasingly relies on the political, economic, and cultural values produced by communication” (2007, p. 328).

The current rhetorical condition is situated within the embedded nature of norms produced by regimes of power within the circulation of a neoliberal economy. As such, immaterial labor in the form of communication has taken on a vital role within the production of the cultural commodity. While communication is interwoven in material production, the new economy has moved into an immaterial economic system in which communication is the primary source of production. For the purposes of this study, my theoretical lens is more consistent with Foucault’s interpretation of neoliberalism through his understanding that power is not fixed between class relations but interlaced within all forms of social productions, in which rhetoric plays a vital role in perpetuating power relations. It is important to recognize the conversation between Foucault’s theory of the economy through the incorporation of Marxist theoretical concepts, which his theory builds upon. Therefore, it is important to analyze the role of rhetoric in the pervasive production of power in all forms of life, including the material and embodied effects of neoliberal discourse on the body.

Methodology

Theory is able to help guide material performances of interpretation through the methodology. Therefore, it is my intention to use rhetorical theory in order to find materiality of performance through methodological interpretation. Building on Greene’s (1998) definition of rhetorical materialism -as rhetorical practices creating conditions of possibilities (p. 22) --and Calafell’s (2010) intersectional approach to incorporate

multiple methodologies, the method for this study incorporates both a materialist and embodied rhetorical approach to discourses surrounding outsourcing and offshoring labor. The effects of neoliberal discourse on the body produces a material consequence and cannot be separated from labor production. The methodology that is implemented within this research includes an incorporation of both materialism and embodied forms of rhetoric in order to provide an intersectional analysis of discourse production within neoliberalism.

Materialist Rhetoric

Greene (1998) applies materialist rhetoric through a Foucauldian lens of power as a technology of deliberation via governing apparatuses (1998, pp. 21-22). A governing apparatus is able to police populations through technologies that function through power in order to protect and secure a population, many see this technology as intrinsic to biopolitics. Greene (1998) writes, “from this perspective, rhetorical practices function as a technology of deliberation by distributing discourses, institutions, and populations into a field of action” (p. 22). He furthers his statement by acknowledging how the actions allow judgments regarding how governing technologies should control. However, Greene (1998) does not see this power as a dominant force but one of possibility, this is a strategic move away from the hermeneutics of suspicion of Marxist thought. He writes, “[...] the materiality of rhetorical practices exist in how they occupy a position in different institution structures historicizing those institutions as the same time as these institutions put rhetoric to work for the purpose of governing (1998, p. 35). Material rhetoric is situated within governing apparatus in order to define the effects of material rhetoric in the actions of policing populations. In addition, it eschews an ideological

bipolar model of dominant and exploitative discourses by explaining how power is occurring and not exploring if it is a hidden agenda of the ruling class.

Greene (1998) contends that critics will be able to conclude how representation is conducted through the rhetorical redistribution of deliberation by governing. If critics are able to reframe their analysis, then, rhetoric can move beyond a hermeneutics of suspicion to an understanding of how governing discourses constitute populations. Furthermore, following Greene's (2009) materialist logic, critics should pay closer attention to the body as a condition of rhetoric (p. 44). He writes, "...a materialist rhetoric should, first and foremost, be concerned with locating rhetorical practice and subjectivity within a material ontology of production" (2009, p. 45). In other words, if the material discourses of governmentality move populations through security and surveillance, then, we should also look at the effects upon the individual body.

Critical Organizational Discourse

Stuart Hall (2001) using Foucault's definition summarizes that discourse is not language, but a system of representation (p. 72). In this sense, discourse is productive and expansive creating and producing meaning systematically. In order to create meaning or knowledge as Foucault (1978) has implied then our everyday lives must be represented through a series of utterances of which we are able use to understand and comprehend the world around us. On an individual scale we take comfort in making sense of our lives through social cues and negotiated conversations. While discourse has a role in all levels of knowledge it is important to study how particular discourses shape our understanding of work. Neoliberalism is a particular moment in time or epoch; therefore, discourses take on particular roles and messages through the rhetoric of the market. Furthermore, a

defining factor between language, communication, and discourse is the ability act upon discursive messages. By acting upon our knowledge then we are able to see the completion of sense making. Producing and representing knowledge the market is able to construct solidified notions of what it means to be a white-collar worker within the service industry and how they must produce their labor through discursive expectations.

Discourses of labor and work are created and reinforced by the market, culture, and discipline. These embedded ideologies are appropriated by organizational culture in order to build upon and create new forms of labor expectations. Cheney et al. writes:

“Corporate Rhetoric serves two primary functions: it draws on existing cultural assumptions to support/condemn and/or legitimize/de-legitimize particular policies, and, more importantly, it reproduces and reinforces the cultural assumption on which it is based” (2004, p. 90).

Cheney et al. are describing organizational rhetoric that is used for the consumer, however this concept is also valid internally. The authors missed the other side of signification, that the organization incorporates the same persuasive message it dictates to the consumer about a product or service and internalizes it to socialize its employees.

According to Mumby (1998), an organization will use formal and informal communication to create a sense of organizational consciousness, which creates a system of meaning through everyday practices (p.11). Cheney et al, (2004) add to the concept of socialization by acknowledging that, “A rhetorical view of organizational discourse, then, focuses on the strategic possibilities of discourse in action. Thus, strategy as a rhetorical concept is considerably more complicated than the persuasive intent of organizational alone” (p. 85). In other words, we must look to the discursive to understand how organizations and employees create meaning.

Workers are able to create understandings of organizational culture and broader cultural expectations of production through the discursive system of representation. Grant and Hardy (2004) define organizational discourse as opposed to larger discursive meaning by incorporating texts such as, embodied practice, communicating, and acknowledging how these sources of meaning making are able to produce and reproduce discourse within the organization (p. 6). Thus, organizational discourse provides an area where I am able to question the motives of labor as they continue to produce against feelings of betrayal and self-worth. Broadfoot et al. (2004) write,

“Conceptualizing the relationship between discourse and organization as mutually constitutive allows scholars to explore the productive duality inherent in both discourse and organization. As a result, discourse and organization are considered as both producer and product” (p. 194).

As a product of Foucault’s theory that power is productive, discourse also incorporates a similar cyclical pattern of producing, reproducing, changing, and influencing the way we conduct ourselves in society. While power is very much intertwined in discourse, as I discuss later on in this section, discursive representations are able to build and disseminate knowledge. Furthermore, as Broadfoot et al. and others have explored discourse is ultimately constitutive.

While it is important to shine a light to particular organizational discourses that create their subjects, it is imperative that we look to broader discourses that permeate the larger cultural landscape to inform us about work. The broader narratives and utterances of work steep into organizational culture and norms to create new and/or specific knowledge informing us how to act. What happens in the workplace and in the cultural landscape shape and mold knowledge, which becomes common understandings of what it

means to be productive or a disciplined worker. Along with expectations of what is required of us as laborers is the notion of what we expect from our supervisor, company, and communities for fulfilling our requirements of the productive model worker. While one discourse informs how we should work, the other indicates the rewards we should receive for conducting ourselves in praxis. Mumby (1988) notes this occurrence as a way for organizational members to find a semblance of equality (p.17). However, each side of the relationship between work and expectation negotiate meaning based upon dominant discourses and everyday experiences. There is no stability to discourses of work, only possibilities based on production needs, market control, and incentives.

In essence, the circulation of discourse becomes a negotiation of people consenting and resisting neoliberal control. Therefore, the system of representation has to be intrinsically located within the social. Fox and Fox (2004) define discourse as follows, “By ‘discourse’ we mean language as meaningful social action: a key instrument of individuals’ and groups’ participation in social roles, social contexts, social situations, and social processes” (p. 15). It is within the social we are able to see the consent through discursive practice. It is in this space where social relations are produced and reproduced through knowledge mediated by discourse. Connors and Solomon (2014) remark on the social as a site where neoliberal discourses interact with actors and action. They write:

“By paying attention to the dynamics of how everyday interlocutors discursively engage one another, we can better come to appreciate the interactive or ‘dialogical’ nature of the process of neoliberalization as it works itself out in specific contexts, as well as the inherent tensions underlying such a process” (p. 217).

While Connors and Solomon engage everyday social relations as a context where neoliberal norms take hold they also mention the possibilities of resistance. As I discuss

resistance in the next chapter, it is important to note that discourse has to be tangled in social aspects of everyday life in order to enforce hegemonic messages. Reality construction that is implemented within these contexts allows for dominant economic meaning to flow freely in conversation and practice.

It is also through this everyday incorporation of discourse that meaning, subjectivity, and social identities are formed. Discourse in this sense is not limited to one or two prevailing messages. It takes numerous, consistent, and responsive discursive reasoning to insure a pervasive incorporation of ideology. Mumby and Stohl (1991) argue, “A particular hegemonic social formation is thus articulated through various discursive practices which function ideologically to ‘fix’ meaning in a particular way” (p. 316). The authors continue by stating that, these practices must be grounded in everyday interactions in order to produce the intended material effects. Thus, everyday knowledge construction is essential for hegemonic concepts to establish meaning take hold and continue to reinforce our dependence on disciplining norms. Furthermore, as this knowledge becomes entrenched in our culture and identity formations it also is embodied and materially incorporated in what becomes the visual representation of these messages. Once the action of discourse has been achieved, we have a clearer insight into discourse as constitutive of social realities.

Chapters Overview

Chapter Two gives an overview of the project by discussing the importance of using methodology to capture a macro and micro understanding of how outsourcing and offshoring affects the workplace through neoliberal governmentality. The third and fourth chapters allow the co-participants to speak about their experience of living through both

outsourcing and offshoring. These two chapters are broken down into three main themes that emerged from the data: self-worth, performance, and precarity. Finally, the last chapter discusses the implications of the effects of neoliberalism in the workplace when laborers are faced with uncertainty due to outsourcing and offshoring.

Conclusion

This dissertation explores the questions of how the process of outsourcing and offshoring are negotiated rhetorically by modern laborers in the service industry. The following chapters develop a rhetorical approach to both Marxist theory and Foucault's philosophy of neoliberalism, in which labor can be analyzed through a conversation between these two theories, which examine the inherent contingency of modern political economy. In this work, I bridge both theoretical approaches together through rhetorical methods in order to advocate for a new lens for understanding the current economic situation. However, this dissertation is more consistent with Foucault's interpretation of neoliberalism through his understanding that power is not fixed between class relations but interlaced within all forms of social productions in which rhetoric plays a vital role in perpetuating power relations. By using material and embodied rhetoric to analyze narrative accounts of offshoring and outsourcing within a corporate site, this study is able to expose the material macro effects of neoliberalism within the micro site of the body. Therefore, this scholarship discovers how neoliberal discourses are perpetuated in order to discipline bodies into producers of value.

CHAPTER TWO

My argument is that the gaps and contradictions between lived experience of exploitation and the discourses that justify or overlook that exploitation are resources for critique and action (Cloud, 2011, p. 176)

Chapter 1 gave the context and theoretical overview of this case study. This chapter discusses how ethnographic interviewing allows an articulation of neoliberal discourse from the position of labor and their narratives of embodied practices. These discourses move the site of neoliberal power onto the body and are revealed through the enactment of labor within the workplace. More specifically, this project explores the consequences and negotiations of neoliberal expectations of labor when particular workforces are faced with job uncertainty due to outsourcing and offshoring.

The neoliberal economy operating on the level of discourse and individual internalization and regulation of that dialogue is then able to construct the framework of citizenship. The meaning of citizenship in this regard refers to the living labor that is governed through technologies of governmentality. Ong (2006) defines these areas of population management at the intersection of technologies of subjectivity and

technologies of subjection (p.6). Both technologies turn to the market to prescribe particular ways of producing economic subjects for example, technologies of subjectivity uses self-regulation and discipline of the body while technologies of subjection govern through policy and political spaces. Thus, the market and the social converge into all areas of everyday life on both the micro level of the individual and the macro area of populations. I argue that discourse is the bonding agent of power that informs citizen's decisions, actions, and performances of work.

While not unique to neoliberalism, power relies on a variety of norms to organize the conditions of possibility for social practice. What is specific to this era is the many ways these specific norms are manifested at the level of discourse, which are then able produce power and resistance rhetorically. However, power as articulated through rhetoric is not limited to the origin of discourse it is also performed and reinforced by self-regulation of the body. In both of these conditions technologies of governmentality play a fundamental role in the developing and circulating neoliberal control in everyday life. It is through the regulation of populations imposed by the rationality of the market governmentality is able to effectively consolidate the social and the market into a comprehensive economy.

Within this moment of neoliberalism, the body can no longer function as a means to produce material labor. There is little we can contribute to the debate of whether the body is distinguishable from material production or a tangible good, this is no longer a practical discussion in Post-Fordism. The body itself is a site of materiality where discourse has taken up residency as the manager of neoliberal norms that attempt to transform the subjectivity of individuals to what Foucault has determined at the enterprise

society. Therefore, in order to study neoliberalism's production of power from both the technologies of subjectivity and subjection it is essential that this chapter examine the influence of rhetorical discourses that operate through governmentality, which constructs and influences the *homo oeconomicus*. In other words, this chapter addresses neoliberal power in both the broader application of policies and norms that are appropriated through discourse, and how these discourses are embodied through individual self-regulation. These particular performances of production become outcomes of embodying norms to a degree of performativity in which work ethic becomes a measure of self-worth and perseverance even when facing the probability of losing your job to a pool of cheaper skilled labor force.

Objective of Proposed Research Study

Examining how outsourcing is a technology of the neoliberal economy through biopolitics, I used ethnographic interview methods with members of a Licensing Department at Company X¹ detailing the way in which neoliberal discourse has constructed labor populations within the phenomenon of outsourcing and offshoring. The next two chapters will analyze the material effects of rhetoric in the production of a service and within discourses surrounding outsourcing and offshoring. Moreover, this phenomenon has real effects on how discourse is utilized to enforce dominant notions of what it is to be an American white-collar worker, and how biopolitical control of populations at the global level poses a rhetorical problematic of what it means to be a global citizen through production. My study of discourse within neoliberalism becomes vital to understanding why service industry occupations are so easily outsourced and offshored, and how rhetoric is able to mediate the loss of jobs to lower paid labor.

Examining how outsourcing is a technology of the neoliberal economy through governmentality, I have conducted interviews in the Licensing Department at a fortune 500 company detailing the way in which rhetoric has controlled labor populations within the phenomenon of outsourcing and offshoring. Building on Harvey's (2007) notion that neoliberalism is a hegemonic mode of discourse and Hanan's (2013) argument that economics is irreducibly rhetorical, I contend through my dissertation that Communication theory is inherently linked to the study of economics through production, specifically within the service sector and the impact of outsourcing and offshoring. Thus, my dissertation shows the material effects of rhetoric in the production of a service and within discourses surrounding outsourcing and offshoring.

Research Questions

This project questions the material effects of rhetoric in the production of a service and within discourses surrounding outsourcing and offshoring explicitly, by asking two questions:

- (1) What neoliberal discourses shape understanding and performances of work specifically, when faced with job uncertainty due to offshoring or outsourcing
- (2) How are discourses of neoliberalism surrounding normative ideals of the *homo oeconomicus* negotiated when there is a possibility of outsourcing and offshoring?

Riessman (2003) writes:

To put it simply, one can't be a self by oneself, identities must be accomplished in shows that persuade. Concepts of self do not come into being only in discourse

situations, of course, but it is primarily through discourse that selves are represented and, consequently, enter the social world (p. 7).

Through the performance perspective and with the application of rhetorical materialism and embodiment, these research questions shed new light onto how employees of a Licensing Department in a fortune-500 company negotiate neoliberal discourses in the workplace while facing a possible job loss due to offshoring in India. The performance narrative approach to conducting interviews allows the participants to share how they embody neoliberal discourses within the workplace while creating material consequences. The first research question deciphers dominant discourses of neoliberalism, while the second question interrogates these discourses and strives to understand the fluidity and negotiation of work in situational settings.

Interview Method

Using critical ethnographic interviewing as my methodology allows a narrative production of meaning. Madison (2005) defines critical ethnography as:

Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain. By 'ethical responsibility,' I mean a compelling sense of duty and commitment based on moral principles of human freedom and well-being, and hence a compassion for the suffering of living beings (p. 5).

In other words, the interview process creates ways for researchers to understand dominant neoliberal discourses and their effect upon performances of individual workers. More specifically, interviewing as a method allows the voices of my co-participants to take center stage in my research. Furthermore, Madison argues that critical ethnography strives to take the analysis below the surface of initial observation and hegemonic understandings of meaning. In fact, this method should be used to disrupt and question

power by bringing it to the surface by the study. The methodology within this study follows Madison's example to bring to light the control and subjectivity neoliberal norms have on the body of the white-collar worker.

In Chapters 2 and 3 I analyze 5 interviews from 5 different Company X Licensing Department employees for this study using Riessman's (2008) dialogic and performance analysis with added clarifications using critical organizational discourse as delineated by major themes that emerged from the interview data. By applying discursive and performance analysis, I look for personal narratives regarding work and the intersection of neoliberal discourses that surround outsourcing and offshoring. Reissman (2008) describes this methodology as follows, "it interrogates how talk among speakers in interactively (dialogically) produces and performed as narrative" (p. 105). Performative analysis allows a participant to share experiences and perform their positionality within the narrative account (Langellier, 1999; Langellier & Sullivan, 1998; Lincoln, 2005; Peterson & Langellier, 1997; Riessman, 2003; Riessman, 2008). This methodological approach allows all bodies to be implicated within the research including the researcher. The incorporation of self-reflexivity from the researcher, allows for a dimension of representation and interpretation within the narrative data. Performance analysis allows for the narrative accounts through transcript data and observations to create a story surrounding neoliberal discourses and the material embodied performance of these discourses surrounding potential job loss due to offshoring.

Positionality, objectivity, and praxis are all concepts that go into conducting a successful ethnography. Within critical ethnographic interviewing, these three conditions are increasingly reflexive and fluid. Positionality requires the researcher understand the

position of power within his or her area of study as well as his or her power in relation to the subject matter. Positionality is grounded in the area of subjectivity. However, there must be a level of objectivity within the research. Through objectivity the research about the participants is garnered through the push and pull of the dialogue between the Other and the researcher with a goal of greater understanding and breath of inquiry. Lastly, praxis is the application of theory as a method. In other words, it is a way for the researcher to bring a high level of thought into a practice of interpreting or analyzing subject matters. All three concepts are crucial in conducting a successful ethnography. Awareness of subjectivity and objectivity create a check and balance of representation of the Other, while praxis provides a lens or framework for not only conducting research but interpreting findings.

Participants

I have conducted four interviews with past and present employees of the “Licensing Department at Company X.” over a month long process. Participants for this study include both self-identified women and men that are past, present, in-house temps, and temporary employees placed within the department by an outside agency. In compliance with the university’s Institutional Review Board policies, participants are all over 18 years of age, have all signed consent documents, and have been informed about the scope of this project. All participant information will remain anonymous and have pseudonyms associated with their narratives. The fortune 500 company where the workplace and phenomena occurred will also be known as Company X. Many of my co-participants still work at Company X and agreed to participate in this study with the understanding that any identifying attributes to their person remain anonymous as their

participation can lead to reprimand, termination, or lawsuit. The age demographics of the sample range from 25-60, with a majority of the participants self-identifying as White or Latino, heterosexual and middle class. All participants consist of past and present employees within the same salary range. The data gathered from the interview gives an overview of both the perspective of employees that left the company from a “looking back” narrative, and the present “being-in or looking-forward” account.

Recruitment. Recruitment began by contacting my former colleagues from the Licensing Department at Company X. Through nonprobability sampling, or the selection of specific subjects, I used purposive recruitment efforts consistent with my familiarity with the participants. According to Babbie (2010), purposive sampling, a type of nonprobability sampling, is a way to select a sample passed on knowledge of the population (Babbie, 2010, p. 193). I have a personal relationship with the participants that is discussed in the next section as I outline the case study and my position stemming from my employment within the department. Each of my former colleagues supported and encouraged each other to participate in this study due to my relationships with them and the need voice their experiences. Therefore, purposive sampling became evident based on my prior knowledge of the population.

Interviewing data analysis comprises the majority of my study. Therefore, I incorporate self-reflexivity to position myself as a researcher and former employee of the Licensing Department. Within the next two chapters I analyze interview data in order to determine how discourses of outsourcing and offshoring are formed and performed through interaction and communication of the participants. The majority of the data comes from one-on-one open-ended dialogic interview sessions. Since the participants all

know each other on a personal basis, I am choosing to conduct one-on-one interviews in order to create an open space for dialogue. As a plan of inquiry, I had a set of open-ended questions that facilitated narratives and conversation pertaining to performance of outsourcing and offshoring narratives in which I analyze with Reissman's (2008) thematic and performance methodology with clarification stemming from critical organizational discourse.

Data Analysis

Using Reissman's (2008) thematic, dialogic, and performance analysis, I analyze interview transcripts and observations. The application of performance analysis requires the interview data to emerge within the contextual, interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive narrative accounts. Narrative in conjunction with performance stresses the importance of keeping the story as a whole. Reissman writes, "[...] narrative scholars keep a story 'intact' by theorizing from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases" (p. 53). Furthermore, Reissman states it is imperative that we, as researchers, use full narratives to produce our interpretations. Therefore, I went through each interview by reading the transcript and listening to each interview in order to discover whole narratives that incorporate embodied performances of neoliberal discourses. These narratives in turn help explain how labor is able to negotiate what it means to produce during a precarious situation.

After multiple readings and listening's of the interview transcripts, I applied Reissman's (2008) thematic analysis in conjunction with performative methodology. Each narrative is kept in their entirety in order to create themes that emerged from the interview data. Thus, each individual interview includes an embodied articulation of

outsourcing and offshoring discourses within its narrative that constitutes an object of study or theme. In other words, the descriptions constructed in the narrative built three overarching themes that created my unit of analysis. Peterson and Langellier (1997) contend that the identification of the ‘object of study’ creates the unit of analysis. The authors speak to this unit of analysis as such, “personal narrative as situated performance practice problematizes text/context relations in terms of the politics of knowledge and identity” (p. 137). This research discovers Other forms of rhetorical analysis within the narratives in order to interpret embodiment and subsequent performance of neoliberal discourse within the micro and macro context of neoliberalism. Furthermore, examining complete narrative accounts strengthen the argument that neoliberalism has a profound impact on the service industry laborer.

The next two chapters take the three major themes of narrative significance and interpret them through critical organizational discourse analysis. By using thematic and performance methods in order for the themes to emerge, the narratives are able to give voice to a type of dialogue or interaction such as, sense making, resistance, historical references, or recurrent situations (Riessman, 2008 p. 75). I used this type of coding to generalize across the data set in order to create a framework for the critical organizational discourse analysis. In other words, when each salient theme emerged from the text, I applied discursive analysis to compare and contrast each individual’s negotiation with performing his or her labor within each theme. This creates a systematic approach to the analysis of the data in order to create an understanding of workplace performance through narrative themes of embodied neoliberal discourses. In addition, by using Riessman’s (2008) definition of thematic analysis, I instigate questions of who, when,

why, and for what purpose did this narrative arise (p. 105). Furthermore, in keeping with the performative tradition, each participant has an active voice in order for the reader to engage with the text (p. 107).

Case Study

The following personal narrative serves a purpose for this project in two ways. First, I am able to put this case study into context using my own words and responses to my experience. Second, my voice allows for the reader to interpret how I position myself as a researcher within this project and how self-reflexivity is always at the forefront of my mind due to my personal involvement at the site and in my relationships with the participants. Berry (2011) states that, “Exploring the roots of our ethnographic stories means directly and shamelessly studying our personalized relationship to ethnographic research as cultural phenomenon” (p. 167). The realization of my past is the beginning of my reflexive work and my declaration of positionality within this research. My obligation is to my former colleagues and their narratives. They are the ones that called me to this research in order for their voices to be represented and heard. Being silenced in a situation that is more common and destructive than most Americans realize developed into the crux of this project. This study strives to give voice to the many workers in the corporate world that feel disposable or insecure due to the threat of losing their job through the few willing to speak from their realizations.

Many of us that worked within the temp world approach our short-term assignments as either a means to an end until the next job, or a space to prove our work ethic in hopes of fulltime employment. As someone who has lived through the experience of precarity in the workplace I have to continuously utilize self-reflexivity in order to

allow for the participants' narratives to describe their experiences and not for them to validate my own history. Madison (2011) incorporates a self-reflexive practice with what she has defined as the performative-I. She explains,

“The dialogical performative is a commitment to the labor of reflexivity because the ethnographer not only contemplates his or her actions and meaning in the field (reflective) but also she or he turns inward to contemplate how she or he is contemplating actions and meaning” (p. 130).

Through dialogue of my narrative, I am able to critically look at how my past and present construct my ethnographic researcher lens.

Personal narrative. On Tuesday, September 15th 2009 I walked into what can only be described as a large corporate campus. Corporation X, a very large fortune 500 company with retail stores located throughout the United States housed its headquarters in a suburb of Chicago. This would be one of the countless numbers of temp jobs that I worked since leaving the confines of the academy three years prior. After receiving my master's degree and working various internships to set me up for the job market proved to be fruitless endeavors in the “real world” I became a temporary worker as a last resort. Despite my every effort to secure a stable career in the public sector, I was inundated with rejections that created my new labor identity of being over educated and under skilled. That is how I found myself on the door of another short-term assignment that constantly left me wondering which one of my life decisions brought me to this.

As I waited for my new supervisor to procure me from the holding area occupied by the Human Resources Department, I anticipated what this job would require of my skillset. Picturing the vast numbers of files I will have to create, copy, send, and file away for the next temp left me feeling a strange mixture of disappointment and relief. While

my past temp work left me expecting mind numbing administrative work, I was also alleviated of my constant worry of finding the next job before my bills were due. Unlike some of the other temps I did not need the job for extra money I needed it to live. However, the further I got into the temp industry I noticed that the trend was moving towards most identifying with my situation. Being a temp the in the middle of the 2008 great recession, it was not surprising that most temps were using these jobs as a bridge to a fulltime position.

I felt excited to start a new position with limitless potential to prove myself in this environment. I was guided through a maze of hallways, offices, and cubicles to reach a large computer lab with ten other employees from the agency. We were told that this was the first group training for a very large project to incorporate beer and wine into all of the local retail stores. The company brought us onboard for this project because they needed to license the stores as quickly as possible. The timeline that was initially established proved to rigorous for their fulltime employees and four in-house temps. Therefore, we had to rapidly learn how to license each store in order for them to legally sell alcoholic products. The training took place over a three-day period where we had to learn how to use a tracking database along with understanding the process of licensing which was not standard among stores, local, and state governments. They also taught us best practices to communicate with both the store managers and local governments. They gave us practice applications to fill out and plenty of time to learn the database that would help us keep track of each store licensing process. In addition, to tracking the store on the database, they would still need a hard copy file with all the application materials printed for the renewal process.

Even with all of the training I understood very quickly that the process took on a life of its own when I began to license my own stores. I was given half the stores in the state of Oklahoma to begin licensing for beer and wine. Starting with the research that the corporate legal team put together I created an attack plan. First, I researched information on 3.2 beer which was the only product we could license for in Oklahoma. Secondly, I called the mayor's office located in the store's municipality. I asked a number of questions about the process and asked them to email me their application to begin processing. Many of the applications were quite extensive asking for manager fingerprints and background checks along with those of the district manager, CEO and COO of the company. Additionally, the requirements needed for the application included corporate financial information, annual reports, social security numbers and addresses for the top level executives, blueprints of the store layout, building code checks, health code checks, public hearings, and constant communication with the local governmental official processing the license. Needless to say, any number of things could be missed or go wrong that would either lengthen the process on the demanding timeline or render it a failure completely. There were always a lot of moving pieces that consisted of mainly of managing people and expectations. The first few weeks on the job proved difficult for my direct supervisor and me due to my fear of not doing a good job and learning the complex irregularities of application to application. I would constantly walk the great divide between the temp cubicles on the other side of the department floor to the cubicles that housed the corporate employees to ask any number of questions that were rife with uncertainty and fear. While I was aware of the strain that my constant stream of questions were putting on my supervisor and the disruptions to his work, I lead with the notion that

I would inevitably screw up if I tried to figure out these finer points on my own. I also knew that my insecurity in the work was leading to some of the full time employees questioning my competencies to complete the work that was entrusted to me.

Fearing my imminent recusal was constantly plaguing my every decision while working on each application. In turn, my fear made me increasingly insecure in my work and brought about even more questions. Only after I made a decision to ask my supervisor how I was doing my worry abated. Even with the frustration of my constant inquiries I was one of the only temps to create nearly flawless applications. The feedback increased my feelings of accomplishment and self-worth due to the praise of my work performance. This proved to be good timing as I began to produce more licenses than most of the temps. I was given more states and stores to work on while half the temps were filtered into different departments or relieved from the project. It became clear that the first month of the project was a weeding out process where the department only kept the most efficient among us.

As we continued the project many of the temps were dismissed or left for full time employment. The ten of us that were left kept moving forward with the work and continued to produce at high levels. However, the upper management was not satisfied with our completion rates and required us to put in overtime. Temps were allowed to volunteer for overtime however we needed permission from our direct supervisor. In other words, when I jumped at the opportunity to earn time and a half I had to prove to my supervisor that my workload required the extra time commitment. Many of the supervisors did not put in overtime due to their status as salaried employees.

I was left to understand how I felt as a temporary employee at a company that seemingly did not respect me, as a person, only as a worker that could produce at fast rates. I wanted and asked for consideration into full time status but was repeatedly told that might be in the future plans of the department but not at this point in time. After proving myself over and over throughout the first six months of employment I was still a first consideration to copy and file for company employees. I was still terrified of losing my position at any moment, especially when knowing that the licenses were going to be completed within the next few months. I was also scared that I would not matriculate into a doctoral program and would need to secure a job past this project. Always on edge, constantly in fear of losing my position, treated like an afterthought by the management, and given the most remedial work despite my exceptional track record for obtaining licenses, I was still an expense to get cut. My observations of self-worth afforded by the company were only tempered by my fellow colleagues comprised of agency temps, company temps, and my supervisor. I learned during the past three years of corporate work that the people as much as the work can make the job one where you either regret waking up everyday or look forward to spending the majority of your waking life in the company of friends.

The lunchroom provided a space where my co-workers could commiserate while getting to know each other on a personal level. Gradually our talk moved from gossiping about other co-worker's abilities and management expectations to those of uncertainty, fear, and anger. The shift in conversation happened when the management announced that they were going to begin determining if our department would be able to transition to an offshore labor source. For people that were already feeling uncertain about future

employment this move came with anger and frustration, which gave voice to the fear of job loss. I would spend endless amounts of time speculating with the others about what was going to happen to the department and to me in particular. Was I a good enough employee to obtain a fulltime position? Was I producing enough licenses, or did I get along well enough with my colleagues, did management take notice of my incentive, have I proven myself enough, these were all questions that I asked the lunch table and my supervisor obsessively. While I vocalized my stress and fear many people in the department felt the same sense of being unable to control livelihood. This project picks up right after the second unsuccessful attempt at offshoring and subsequent downsizing of the department. One co-participant left the company as a result of the attempt to offshore, while three were hired on as fulltime employees as their friend and co-participant was dismissed.

Purpose of this research in Communication Studies. My lived experiences moving through the corporate minefield is not unique or rare, it is however, a narrative that is so seldom shared in the field of Communication Studies. In fact, the popular media largely ignores positions of precarity within white-collar labor. While this project investigates four years of my survival navigating corporate America, this is a collective narrative of one moment in time where my co-participants and I grappled with being a part of the temporary labor force with an additional burden. We lost of control of the little security we believed in by not being able to prove ourselves through work because no matter what we did, our jobs were going to be taken away from us because of the bottom line. This added layer of uncertainty makes coming to work and caring about our performance a challenging prospect.

I knew going into the interview process that most of the participants would be angry and frustrated with the company and their treatment during the beer and wine project and the subsequent decision to offshore the department. What I did not expect was the frustration and anger turning into compliance and drive to prove their worth as hard working employees to the management. By listening to each participant describe the same narrative of working hard even though it was clearly against their own interests lead me to question why. Why would these employees stop working at their highest abilities when first learning about and navigating through the downsizing attempt to come back still angry but back to working at the same production levels prior to the announcement? While their care and attention did wane the licenses were still produced at the same capacity. I turned to critical organizational discourse as a tool of analysis to help explain the effects of neoliberal discourses on citizenship and how we embody those discourses to override disaffection in order to continue production.

Discursive Practice: Re-telling the Power of the Conduct of Conduct in the Workplace

As the connective vessels of the head to the heart, discursive power flows through the chambers of the neoliberal market and constricts the body's movement beyond controlled production. In essence, everyday discourses provide a perfect canvas in which neoliberal rules and expectations construct norms. The material effects of discourse presents itself as such when performed and followed through a set of rules and regulated to the actions of the body. Riessman (2003) writes, "Concepts of self do not come into being only in discourse situations, of course, but it is primarily through discourse that selves are represented and, consequently, enter the social world" (p. 7). Through the

performance perspective and with the application of rhetorical materialism and embodiment, these research questions shed new light onto how employees of the Licensing Department at Company X negotiate neoliberal discourses in the workplace while facing a possible job loss due to offshoring in India. The performance narrative approach to conducting interviews allows for the participants to share how they embody neoliberal discourses within the workplace while creating material consequences. The first research question deciphers dominant discourses of neoliberalism, while the second question interrogates these discourses and strives to understand the fluidity and negotiation of work in situational settings.

As a consequence of the pervasive nature of discourse to control norms, this project examines the workplace as a site where the intersections neoliberal discourse and performances of the body converge and provide key areas of insight into how corporate entities are able to maintain a high level of productivity throughout the threat of job loss. In a broader examination of neoliberalism this section heavily focuses on discourse analysis from the standpoint of rhetorical organizational communication.

It might make sense to begin with Marx's definition of power, one that begins and ends with the ruling class and creates blind producers of the proletariat. However, this binary model of power loses its effect in the neoliberal era. While we still have the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, power moves more freely and is continuously embodied. Foucault (1978) asserts that, "Power is everywhere" (p. 93). If indeed power is everywhere, then it needs a vehicle to transport its message to everybody. In this case, the carrier of power is discourse. As discussed above, discourse is a relational, everyday, sense making, knowledge producing, social relation that produces and reproduces power.

Purposely in this case, discourse shapes and influences what it means to be a white-collar worker in the service industry at a fortune 500 company about to lose your job to cheaper labor sources.

In terms of governmentality discourse as the site of power is the very building block in which the conduct of everyday life is built upon. Therefore, as the market determines our normative practices, discourse is the medium that circulates these understandings. Moving forward within the next section of this chapter I ask questions regarding sense of self-worth and performance of work while facing insurmountable and external forces that threaten job security. I begin to examine the narratives of four employees in a regulatory department working everyday with the possibility that they may lose their jobs at any moment due to constraints of being an outsourced employee or having their work moved to a cheaper labor source with offshoring. Two major themes emerge from the interview data that are discussed in this chapter: (1) the idea that working hard will produce benefits or rewards and (2) the complicated assertion that self-worth is tied into performances of work. I analyze these narratives through the expectation that discursive power circulates market norms and constitutes populations to act in accordance with the neoliberal economy. The narratives help explain the influence of discourse from the macro power structures embedded in knowledge to the micro material, embodied, and performance of negotiating meaning in work.

Discursive power in organizations

As Foucault stated in one of his many definitions of power that production and reproduction must happen in a number of relations all stemming from social interactions. This particular definition of power can be applied to the larger system of meaning and to

specific spaces of discipline and control. It is clear that the immanent source of power within the workplace and culture at large grounds itself in the infrastructure of neoliberalism. The discourses of consumption and production are intertwined and constantly reinforcing the understanding of what it means to be a citizen, the multiplicity of force relations. By incorporating the cultural discourse into the workplace, power begins to individualize the body and perpetuate the norm providing fuel to the chain or system. Finally, through the organizational expectations of labor crystallization is embodied in the worker informed by market values, corporate performance reviews, and manager competency.

Discourse in this sense is where we find the circulation of power by strategic rhetoric. It also circulates me back to the understanding that discursive practice is grounded in everyday life. As most of our lives are consumed with material and immaterial labor, discourse shapes our understandings of work and work disguised as play. Similarly to the power associated with whiteness discourses of work also take on a hegemonic approach of citizenship. As Nakayma and Krizek (1995) explain, whiteness is a systematic, invisible, strategic, hegemonic discourse that reconstitutes and reinforces thoughts and behaviors in very strategic and fluid ways. The power is in the disciplinary hand of hegemony. The authors continue this argument by writing, “Whatever ‘whiteness’ really means it constituted only through the rhetoric of whiteness. There is no ‘true essence’ to ‘whiteness’; there are only historically contingent constructions of that social location” (Nakayma & Krizek, 1995, p. 293). I argue that there is little difference between the strategic rhetoric of whiteness and the pervasive discourses surrounding work. Both are derived from the rules of the right in order to structure citizenry.

Whiteness, in fact, also constitutes how workers should act in the workplace and organizational culture. It is another form of disciplinary discourse within the multiplicity of force relations. According to Barker and Cheney (1994), “Rules of the right both shape what we know about our relations with one another (e.g., the norms of ‘professional’ behavior) and serve to maintain specific positions of power (e.g., honored expertise)” (p. 25). It becomes clear that many discourses are working together in order for labor to remain compliant to business and the market. If neoliberal norms are able to construct the perfect producer in their image then that body must conform to economic conditions of body, cultural, political, and production standards.

If we agree to be subjectively connected to the hegemonic system of meaning where does one diverge from knowingly to involuntarily accepting dominant norms? The everyday practices that discourse embodies purposely make it difficult for choice due to the pervasive nature and the common sense practice of collective meaning. Barker and Cheney (1994) believe that these everyday practices become so common that they are taken for granted. They write,

“In an organization. We often achieve rational ends through adherence to an agreed-upon procedure (e.g. the proper form, properly completed). References to ‘common sense,’ ‘established business practice,’ and ‘standard operating procedure’ point to the regularization of specific behaviors [...]” (p. 25).

It is not surprising when organizations continue to embed hegemonic discourse within their structures, what has me take pause is the multiplicity of ways that normative behaviors are disciplined into the body.

Employee regulations, standard forms, culture, performance reviews, 360 reviews, the Predictive Index, and the Myers-Briggs personality test are all consenting

strategies that confront an employee to comply by focusing of different aspects of personality, identity, culture, and performance. Fox and Fox (2004) argue,

“Because a corporation’s power is practiced through consent, the social issue at stake is not really about corporations exercising too much power over people. Rather, it is about people accepting corporations practicing power through consent, and about the social acceptability of corporations manufacturing consent” (p. 7).

Fox and Fox make a point to acknowledge that people still have agency to disregard certain discourses. The authors also contend that corporate power is and continues to be socially accepted. However, it is difficult to counteract the message when it is being forced upon the very idea of self. This also leads to question the very heart of neoliberalism, that of individual determination. If one is truly an entity and onto themselves then why would the corporate entrepreneurs have to be shaped in order to fit that role?

Discursive power in organizations is embedded within a complex system of meaning, which is always mediated by power. Power has taken up residence within the discursive system in order to perpetuate hegemonic norms defining labor and production. Organizational discourse is then able to reinforce, individualize, and specialize employee identity construction, as the subject is constituted within corporate culture. This continuous negotiation of power from the neoliberal economy and the workplace builds webs of meaning that strengthen and bend with everyday practice of discourse. Mumby and Stohl (1991) uphold the assertion that day-to-day strength of organizational practices permits employees to be constituted as organizational subjects (p. 317). They explain:

More importantly, power can be conceived neither as located purely in individual actions (as in ‘power to’ or ‘power over’) nor as deterministic feature of organizational structure, but rather must be viewed as constructed through and

instantiated in the discursive practices which structure organizational life (Mumby & Stohl 1991, p. 317).

In other words, power must be a possibility within all forms of social production. While we can locate the where the initial discourse originates, the social nature of the circulation of power becomes negotiated by historical moments and the fluctuation of the market. In addition, circuitous messages generate discursive patterns that uphold power from multiple positions. Thus, power is able to operate as a controlling influence while simultaneously perpetuating itself through managed populations. Mumby (1988) upholds that power is indeed a bifurcated strategy by recognizing that, “Power, in essence, is both a product of organizational activity and the process by which activity becomes institutionally legitimated” (p. 63). It is the outcome or action of the strategies of power where we can begin to take notice of the effects upon populations. In both instances of organizational activity and legitimization power is effectively being produced. Thus, the effects discursive production has to ultimately signify itself through practice or action. It is within the intersection of discursive power and the body where we find the material effects of discourse.

Material effects of discourse. As we have moved into post-Fordism or neoliberal era of the service industry, cognitive, labor, communicative labor, or immaterial labor, materialism can no longer be defined by a physical product in the United States. For example, as someone who performed labor in this department I would define the work as service consisting of filling out licensing applications, learning the policies of particular local governments, coordinating with store managers to adhere to those policies such as background checks, fingerprinting, attending hearings, and store inspections. When

conducting this type of work, I was constantly on the phone with the local governments, store managers, corporate legal, and police departments. A person has to be comfortable with negotiating around red tape and schmoozing local officials to understand all of the steps associated with the application along with pushing approval of the license in a timely manner. While the license itself is a piece of paper that is framed and hung in a visible location in the store, all of the labor associated with obtaining that paper is completely communicative.

In addition to the cognitive labor associated with production and product employees have to be encouraged to finish each application process quickly in order to move on to another state. Discourse defining productivity and expediency proves to be the most effective driver for production even when the work becomes monotonous or in this case, when someone else is trying to take it away entirely. Discursive power moves from the domain of immaterial to material in the way we can interpret productivity when workers feel dejected. In other words, there has to be a force in discourse ascribing meaning to work identity controlling enough to move bodies to produce even when it is not in their best interests. Therefore, if discourse is able to produce material effects of production then we must define this medium of power as material. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) interpret the impact of discursive materiality in organizations as follows, “Discourse frames the materiality of the world for us in particular ways. For example, the concrete, material reality of an organization meeting has substance only insofar as there is a discourse that enables us to participate in and interpret such an event as meaningful” (p. 124). In the case of this study, an event is not limited to a formal meeting; an event can be defined as a series of production outcomes. This event is meaningful to the worker as

a sense of accomplishment or self-worth, while it is consequential to the company through the profit each act produces. Materialism in this regard can be measured in participation and outcomes of production and not necessarily in solid forms of manufactured products.

I argue throughout Chapters Three and Four that it is fundamental to analyze the interview data through discourse analysis because material labor of production is shaped by neoliberal discourse. In addition to the discursive nature of shaping the vessel of labor, the performance of production also constitutes a site of materiality. In essence, this study is able to analyze material production by this equation: discourse (embodiment) performance. Each section of labor represents a form of neoliberal material production. While the individual areas have their own specific processes with social production, each one is continuously informing and articulating neoliberal power by reinforcing meaning through communication, the body, and praxis. Within the respective spaces discourse negotiates both power and resistance in order to produce and reproduce knowledge based upon economic values. This is the foundation of material labor, the position of production and consumption.

Kaplan (2014) understands this reification of the of the economy as follows:

[...] capitalism is a material discourse or rhetoric, an assemblage for enacting 'operations on the meaningfulness of things' whereby these things come to be what they are and to exert, in their very material objectivity, both a refined signifying power and enormous performative force (pp. 134-135).

Amending the word capitalism with neoliberalism, this statement outlines materiality as the outcome of symbolic meaning making and by representing that understanding by doing. That performative force gives possibility to discourse by articulating knowledge as

action. The act of doing work gives another dimension of social meaning making, and reinforces conditioning norms through repetition.

Materiality as performed provides political theorists tangible and visual representations of neoliberal discourse and the effects on the body. The discursive chain thrives in the everyday location of the social, takes meaning from the larger system, enacts that meaning in organizations where individuals embody that knowledge and perform their understanding by practicing and disciplining bodies supported by technologies of subjectivity. The very act should be considered a material product or commodity where both a use value and an exchange value intersect and reside in the body and subsequent performance. The production of discourse and the product of that embodied knowledge create a product that is much more valuable than what we refer to as a traditional commodity. The profit generated by the neoliberal norm of constantly “bringing all human action into the domain of the market” (Harvey, 2005, p. 3) creates a form of materiality where the profit is no less than staggering. Thus, each event that creates the *Neoliberal Circulation of Norms* generates economic power and thereby produces material actions and consequences that fuel the economy. In the next section I move from discursive power to the next event in the production and reproduction of neoliberalism, embodiment.

Embodied effects of discourse. Power as dispersed by discourse allows prominent neoliberal discourses such as meritocracy to use bodies as discursive mediums. These bodies, which make up populations of laborers, begin to produce and reproduce discourse by embodying and subsequently performing work based upon neoliberal norms. By performing particular discourses bodies of the workers are able to extrapolate

power into material and interpretive actions. Thus, the body provides a source of production while also in a state of immaterial labor. The body as a medium is able to create visibility to discourses that we may not recognize as embodied by expressions of work narratives and the actual performances of work. It is only through the embodiment of discourse where we can begin to study the body as a site of neoliberal power.

By embodying discourses, we can study another level of sense making by incorporating the body as a location for the technologies of subjection. Embodiment defined by McKerrow (1998) is a “corporeal rhetoric” or a bodily site to extend the definition of rhetoric to lived experiences (p. 317). He writes, “fitting into another culture, or even within our own culture, requires a corporeal presence – an embodied sense of rhetoric as performance one does, rather than as an analytic, objectified extension of who one is” (McKerrow, 1998, p. 323). In other words, McKerrow (1998) is appealing for a mind/body dualistic extinguishing. Instead, he claims that the body incorporates all aspects of culture and reason, and that we perform rationality through our bodies as a materialist outcome of culture. The intersection of the body through reason and behavior leaves an embodied performance of materiality. Pezzullo (2009) also agrees with McKerrow by writing, “paying attention to bodies and our sensual experiences is involved in every performance studies approach” (p. 198). Therefore, in order to decipher material effects, we must look to the performance of discourse within the body. Beyond the scope of performance studies, rhetoricians must be accountable to study the body as a rhetorical text.

Stormer’s (2006) inclusion of embodied rhetoric hinges on the edge of performativity and materiality. Building on historical materialism, Stormer (2006)

situates the gendered body within the realm of possibility, subverting the traditional gender scholarship of representation. In other words, he is explicitly binding materialism directly to the body. He writes, “if you do away with traditional notions of theory and practice, there is no good way to separate experience from rhetorical theory because, materially, they are coincident with each other” (Stormer, 2006, p. 254). Aligned with McKerrow’s (1998) definition of corporal rhetoric, the body and cultural experiences must be one in the same. By moving away from representational and traditional gender scholarship, Stormer (2006) helps direct the reader through the many modes of study to reach a new call of embodiment.

The method of embodiment seems to have found its home within performance and gender. According to Pezzullo (2003), “engaging the politics of the body and embodiment enables feminists to challenge a range of oppressive practices (such as thinking that reifies a mind/body split, suppression or denial of female agency, and spatial politics of gendered labor)” (2003, p.13). That is to say performance and gender provide two avenues in which the body is unmistakably the intersection. Many of the scholars that incorporate embodiment into their work also include a semblance of gender. Similarly to the mind/body dualism that McKerrow (1998) negates through rhetorical corporality, Butler (2008) continues to refute gender as a passive cultural effect and instead advocates for a study of embodied gender as performance. She states:

This “body” often appears to be a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figures as “external” to that body. Any theory of the cultural constructed body, however, ought to question “the body” as a construct of suspect generality when it is figured as passive and prior to discourse. (Butler, 2008, pp. 175-176)

In other words, the site of the body inscribes a materialist reality produced by the social and performed through gender constructions. The body through discourse creates a rhetorical problematic, in which embodiment materially acts via performance. Bowman and Pezzullo (2009) clarify gender as material performance by stressing that it has to be performed, that the material is inconsequential unless the act is being performed within a social context (2009, p. 196). Thus, embodied practices only become material sites of production through the performance. By incorporating embodiment within the discourse of labor, we can include the body as a text of materiality.

Conclusion

Pollio et al. (1997) write the following quote that can best sum up my expectations for this project, “What is sought by both existentialism and phenomenology is a rigorous description of human life as it is lived and reflected upon in all of its first-person concreteness, urgency, and ambiguity. For existential-phenomenology, the world is to be lived and described, not explained” (Pollio et al, 1997, p.5). Through the study and observation of my former workplace and my fellow colleagues, I was able to use ethnographic methods to create a dialogue with the site itself and the inhabitants that worked within its confines. The former relationships and interactions permitted me to approach the site with lived knowledge and memories of my physical and hierarchical place within the department. While I experienced the site as someone who wanted to prove myself and join in the organization, I also began my interviews and interpretation of the phenomena four years after my departure. The time away from the field afforded me new insights and perspectives to my co-participant’s narratives and my own experience. However, as a participant of this workplace my study started to form through

my relationships and past experience within the site. Therefore, it only made sense to use ethnographic interviewing grounded in existential-phenomenology in order to allow the data to create the framework of this project.

The norms of neoliberalism derive from market ethics of social relations. Discourses then carry messages of the market to everyday social interactions where they frame and build the foundations of meaning making and knowledge. Within these everyday interactions discourse is able to produce and reproduce neoliberal power by continually negotiating and appropriating new ways of making sense of the world and the marketplace. Embedded within these discursive strategies is power emanating from the market in order to shape populations into sources of production. However, there is no longer a demarcation of the private and public borders of work. Labor is always and continuous practice of production and consumption.

This chapter outlined the multiple ways neoliberal discourse is able to drive material production in the workplace. Two of the main avenues of neoliberal power reside within discursive production and embodied representation. It is within discourse where neoliberal messages are able to create knowledge and discipline informing citizenship and labor. Through embodying those discourses the body takes on another level of sense making where the individual becomes a site neoliberal performativity. The rhetorical text of the body provides a new site of analysis for organizational communication scholars interpreting the effects of neoliberalism in both the body of the worker and the production that it structures. Chapter Three continues to explore the material effects of neoliberal discourse on the body and through production. The body as a rhetorical text allows the study of materialism through the practice and performance of

production. This chapter also addresses the next level of discursive interaction by looking at performance of labor through the lens of precarity and governmentality. It is here where I discuss the effects of Foucault's *homo oeconomicus* as a technology of subjectivity and subjection as a part of the discursive system controlling worker attitudes and production through possible job loss due to the precarious predicament of outsourcing and offshoring.

CHAPTER THREE: OUTSOURCING

Neoliberalism as a political rationality, cuts across all borders and domains by collapsing public and private life into one lived experience informed by the market. The neoliberal norms we embody through discursive means create performances of citizenship that are further rearticulated in the workplace. These performances of work create what Foucault defined in the economic man or the *homo oeconomicus* by marking us as enterprising, competitive, self-disciplining bodies of production. Therefore, discursive production and reproduction of neoliberal norms such as the *homo oeconomicus* provide an area of study where scholars can examine the intersection of rhetoric, political economy, and performance and the body. It is at this crossroads where I begin the examination of neoliberalism as a performed economy. Performance as embodied discursive practice can be distinguished within the workplace through material approaches to labor. However, we can only see how embedded normative discourses transpire by looking at performances of work when there is an added layer of uncertainty or difficult working conditions. The uncertainty, or as I will call it throughout the chapter, precarity, creates another lens of neoliberal consequences of which labor has to negotiate.

It is within the precarious workplace where scholars can truly comprehend neoliberalism as a regime of power and knowledge that must be performed.

As outlined in the first chapter, neoliberalism is circulated through the technologies of governmentality. As one of these technologies, the study of discourse gives researchers insight into governmentality and how it plays an integral role in the circulation of power in the workplace. Nadesan (2008) defines the use of governmentality as a lens to analyze neoliberalism as follows, “Likewise, governmentality provides a framework for analyzing homologies across ‘employee driven’ corporate human resource policies that shift risk to employees and neoliberal, international economic policies pursued by the World Bank” (p. 1). Thus, I argue this project balances on the critical understanding of the overarching concept of governmentality in conjunction with technologies such as discourse to get a more comprehensive knowledge of how this form of rule operates and substantiates neoliberal power. Therefore, by examining the macro governing structure, the micro impacts such as discursive norms can become illuminated. This chapter begins the conversation establishing a cause and effect relationship of policies around labor and the consequences materialized by the laboring bodies in the workplace. Within this chapter, I begin to review questions of why labor can perform at high levels of production even in the face of uncertainty specifically regarding outsourcing. It is my intention to highlight the effects of neoliberalism in the workplace from a performative ground up perspective. In Chapter One, I gave a detailed explanation of neoliberalism from the macro and political overview, and it is within this chapter where the voices of the individual workers give account to the effects of this doctrine in the workplace. In fact, it is within the words of the participants where we begin to

ascertain the precarious effects of neoliberalism and its shaping of citizenship through the performance of work. Miller and Rose define the need to discover his or herself through work as follows:

The worker has to come to be understood and targeted as an active participant in the activity of work, not merely as an instrument of production but as a person: a human being realizing his or her self through work, or as a democratic citizen with certain capacities and rights (2008, p. 176).

I argue that the discourses of neoliberalism are so embodied that laborers will continue to perform at a high level of production because of their need to find personal meaning and identity through work even when working hard means working themselves out of a job. As Miller and Rose note, neoliberalism helps actualize the worker by requiring labor to actualize her or himself through the act of work. In this process identity is discovered, managed, and reinforced by the performances of production and the acknowledgement from management in forms of rewards. Throughout the narrative interviews the idea of identity production via neoliberal norms becomes articulated and re-articulated by the retelling of personal labor expectations. Furthermore, outsourcing becomes the catalyst for the Company X licensing employees to increase their dependence on these normative values of labor.

While also defined in the first chapter, it is within this chapter the participants, in their words, describe the overall concept of outsourcing and how their definition differs from normative understandings of labor. In order to unpack the narrative of labor under the context of outsourcing, I argue that it is necessary to understand the conditions of this phenomenon through the explanations of the participants to truly grasp personal

interpretations in conjunction with the academic writings of the workplace. Therefore, in their own words the definition of outsourcing is as follows:

LR: Can you give me some background regarding the outsourcing and offshoring of the department? For example, can you give me some context to why temporary employees were brought into the project?

Grace: So they were hiring me to work full time with benefits almost like a regular employee with the exception of this is a project that will go for 18 months, and you will need to complete the project, and not have any time off during that 18month period, and in no way is this a promise of...any employment past said 18month period.

Arturo: Oh okay. Uh, we had an influx of temporary employees because Company X decided to uh pursue licensing for alcohol in their stores.

LR: Mhm.

Arturo: Beer and wine. And so they hired approximately six employees to pursue the licensing. Uh having been out of it for many, many years I don't think they realized the complexities of getting the licenses. It turned out to be far more complex and time-consuming than we/they anticipated. So, as a result, they hired approximately 25 additional people; these were all temporary employees.

LR: Okay.

Arturo: Uh six of us were hired on as temporary through the company full-time for just that project. And the rest were just hired as temps.

Will: The reason why temporary employees were brought on was because they just wanted to roll everything out within a couple of months, so they had a team of let's say six people and then they made to almost forty just to get everything done really quickly.

Grace A middle aged White woman, Arturo a middle aged Mexican American man, and Will a twenty something White man all conclude their experience of outsourcing as labor that was temporary, project based, with fast-paced deadlines, and without guarantees of secure employment. They also noted that a significant number of temps were brought on in order for the department to comply to the aggressive timeline imposed by the executive officers. It was taken for granted knowledge that this project was a temporary solution for some of the workers looking for something stable in an unstable economy while at the same time knowing it was just a matter of time before they would have to venture again out into the numbers game of the job search. In fact, all of these temporary workers were defined by the will and confines of the beer and wine project. The more stores that acquired the licenses, followed by completing entire states, ultimately lead to diminishing the workforce. However, as a temp, a person is required to work proficiently with the goal of finishing as many stores as one could within the weeks of employment and effectively working oneself out of a job. Of course, if a person did not keep pace with the other temps that would also indicate job loss, therefore each temp was put into a lose-lose condition. Thus garnered from my participant's experiences, I can define the first area of outsourcing as temporary labor hired for the purposes of completing a short-term project. In addition, outsourcing generally means that labor is brought in from a temporary agency to fulfill the needs of an employer on a contractual basis. Continuing with

defining this concept, I concentrate on understanding how outsourced work differs from full-time employee labor.

LR: So, compare yourself as a temp to full-time folks, did you have the same work?

Will: I would think no...I, at that time I didn't really know what they did. I mean it was similar, they were applying for licenses, but the full-time people they were renewing licenses that weren't related to beer and wine, um, they were applying for pharmacy licenses, getting new licenses for new stores, acquisitions, stuff like that.

Building off of the first part of defining outsourcing the second half emerges more into the material labor and precarity of experience. When Will began his position at Company X, he did not understand the nature of the work that the full-time employees conducted. After being at the company for a while and transitioning over to the renewal side of licensing, he began to understand that the work was more involved for him and the beer and wine team. The beer and wine team conducted all of the upfront work, which involved more coordination with local governments, company legal teams, store employees, and district managers, as well as an extensive application process. While renewals are on the back end of licensing where some states might require the same exhaustive application process, usually it was just a matter of filling out the correct paperwork and making sure that all of the store codes were up to date. One has to question the reasoning behind giving a temporary labor force such intricate and detail oriented work. The easiest answer to that question is that neoliberalism's reliance on a flexible, skilled labor force. The more a service laborer is trained, the easier it is to move

them like puzzle pieces that fit into any project. Thereby, building upon learned skills enough to make the worker into a Jack or Jill of all trades.

Outsourced labor from the beginning has been deemed women's work that is regulated to administrative labor, which can include licensing within that understanding (Hatton, 2011, p. 7). My own experiences with being an outsourced employee have all revolved around administrative work. However, I still have to wonder why temps, in this case, were given a more skilled task than the full-time employees. The intricacies of the work lead to the reasoning behind outsourcing a number of people brought onto the project and the explanation of the timeline, but there still was such little investment from the company into the employees. One has to wonder why they put so much responsibility into this pool of labor and why the workers ended up finishing the project so efficiently.

LR: So, how did you see yourself in like the company hierarchy as a temporary employee?

Will: At least in the department I felt like I was...uh...like there was the...how do I say this. I was kinda like the third tier because they had the full-time employee, then they had the temps that were hired through the company, and they had the temps through the agency. And it was all the temps through the agency that were getting fired all of the time, and getting replaced all of the time. So I really felt like...like I was disposable.

When I questioned Will further about how he felt as an outsourced employee, he uses a word that not only caught my attention, it formulated one of the themes to develop from the data. I will talk about this theme later on in the chapter, but I would like to use his language to describe the third and final segment for defining outsourcing. I asked Will

how he felt like a temporary employee within the department, and he answered with the succinct response, “disposable.” He also talked about the idea of being a third tier employee along with the fear of being terminated at a point. Feeling like a cog in the labor chain that can be replaced as soon as perceived as defective would lead one to believe that there will always be a rusted link. Nonetheless, this was not the case. Therefore, this interpretation of being an outsourced employee led me to analyze the dissidence of feeling expendable to performing work at the highest levels in order to diminish the perception of being replaceable and moving into the exceptional due to integration of the work and high production values.

Nevertheless, before I can move into the analysis of that particular aspect of the case study, I would like to take a step back and put the three parts of outsourcing into one solid definition that will inform the rest of this chapter.

Outsourcing and offshoring are two sides of the same coin as both seek sources of cheaper skilled labor while also creating an unstable labor economy that resides in the new normal of precarity. However, understanding and acknowledging this through academic work is quite different than living through it. In this case, my participant’s voices do not take away from the research that has been done on outsourcing they have expanded it to focus on the micro effects of the everyday worker. The definition of this concept becomes clearer through the words of the participants as does the themes of the interview data. All of these explanations provide a conclusion that is not removed from existing studies; it does, however, give meaning to us as researchers and readers on how to look at the workplace and the neoliberal economy on a much more personal scale.

Interview Themes

Throughout the interview data, three major themes have emerged within the context of outsourcing and offshoring. These themes include personal work ethic/self-worth, precarious feelings about work, and performances of production. This chapter and Chapter Four analyze my co-participants lived experience focusing on how these particular workers negotiated their daily work expectations when faced with the possibility of job loss within the context of both outsourcing and offshoring. Remaining true to Foucault's reasoning that power is productive it is important to shed light onto a site of labor where power and resistance bend in-between daily discourses of organizational rhetoric. Many participants in the study proclaimed to feel a loss of power and voice leading directly to tactics of resistance towards the company through their feelings and subsequent production of work. But, by creating acts of resistance the actor was not always aware of the privilege that they embodied or why in the end they terminated their tactics of defiance.

Specifically, many of these acts were mainly concerned with the loss of control as a consequence of feeling powerless. Therefore, I have determined that each act of resistance is informed by the discourse of what it means to be a productive worker or the idealized version of corporate citizenship at the individual level. My attention has been directed towards the notion that punctuated within the conversations of resistance consists a general resentment towards the company on one hand while feeling guilty for not performing to the highest standards on the other. The points of dissidence each of my co-participants struggles with intensify the embodiment of neoliberal norms throughout the context of the narrative.

All of these sections of the interview remain firmly planted in the notion that the acts of defiance were brief and done to make the participant feel less resentful regarding the policies of management and their lack of communication. Once the act began, the shared normative discourse of working hard to become rewarded always created a contradictory and often destabilizing force for the laborer. Thus, the idea of winning the reward of meritocracy and the self-impression of being a good worker terminated the act of resistance. While we see glimpses of resistance, the power of neoliberal discourses remains embedded in the act and body of the worker. In this chapter, my goal is to get a better understanding of neoliberal discourses that control the body of the worker by inventing desire or guilt in order to continue production even in precarious situations. It is also imperative to examine how resistance is informed by neoliberal discourses and how discourse can also pacify these acts.

Outsourcing Overview

I found within the data and my own experience that there are two major areas that are embodied within what can be defined as an extemporary employee. One, they are performing their work to the supervisors expectations and then exceeding them, and two they fit into the organizational culture and become the quintessential team player that is not too team oriented that they forget how to outperform them. It is only then in both the personal/professional and the labor/profession where a person achieves organizational recognition and payout. It is also where we can begin to see the breakdown of the belief in working hard to receive a reward. If a person works hard but does not fit into the organization's culture or bottom line, the reward might never transpire. Also, as seen in the interview data, if someone proves to be a productive and personal employee he/she

still might not reach the goal they are trying to achieve if they do not fit into the company's bottom line. It is, therefore, the mission of this project to study where neoliberal discourses subsume organizational culture and practices.

In this section of the chapter, discourse, embodiment, and performance help to analyze these particular narratives based upon feelings of worth and performance of work. The following conversations are an excerpt taken from the larger interview data collection. The narratives below give everyday lived experience and first-hand knowledge to understanding how employees of a Fortune 500 company negotiate the three salient themes that emerged from the interview data, precarity, self-worth and work performance, as outsourced labor. I asked the participants, Grace, Arturo, Kate and Will to recount their experiences as temporary employees by defining how they understand themselves as temporary labor and their role within the scope of the project they were hired to complete. After the participants define their understandings of outsourcing and the work, I then look within the scope of the challenges associated with being a temporary worker, and finally, as a contractor working in an attempt to offshore the department to India.

Two parts make up an exceptional temporary employee. One, they are performing their work to the supervisor's expectations and then exceeding them, and two they fit into the organizational culture and become the quintessential team player. It is only then in both the personal/professional and the labor/profession where labor will achieve organizational recognition and payout. It is also where we can begin to see the breakdown of the belief in working hard to receive a reward. Thus, if one works hard but does not fit into the organization's culture or bottom line, the reward might never

transpire. In addition, as seen in the interview data, if one proves themselves to be a productive and a personal employee they still might reach the goal you are trying to achieve even if they do not fit into the company's bottom line. It is, therefore, the mission of this project to study where neoliberal discourses rearticulate organizational culture and practices. In other words, certain neoliberal discourses restructure the meaning of other discourses, such as the opposition between work and leisure, which is both informed and reformed by the organization and through cultural meaning.

Outsourcing Interview Data

In this section of the chapter, I begin to analyze the interview data based on the narratives of outsourcing in order to apply the concepts of embodiment and performance to analyze the discourses regarding feelings of worth and performances of work. The following conversations are an excerpt taken from the larger interview data collection. The narratives bellow give everyday lived experience and first-hand knowledge to understanding how employees of a Fortune 500 company negotiate two of the four main themes that emerged from the interview data, self-worth and work performance. I asked the participants, Grace, Arturo, and Will to recount their experiences as one, temporary employee and two, as a contractor working through an attempt to offshore the department to India. One of my main goals of this analysis is to approach neoliberalism from a performative bottom up perspective.

Self-worth. The first theme that emerged out of the data caught my attention during the first two interviews. As we were reliving various past experiences of the workplace prompted by the interview questions, my co-participants seemed to repeat a word that caught my attention. The word, “disposable,” spoke not only to their

interpretation of how they were regarded as workers, but it also gave voice to how I felt when I was their colleague. This word embodied so much meaning, description, and the symbolic realization that I had to question why multiple participants evoked such a visceral reaction from me just by residing in that word.

What exactly does disposable mean and how did it help me create the umbrella theme of personal work ethic/self-worth? Defining this word and this category of analysis, I have turned to my participants and my own explanation. In the interviews below the implied anger and frustration that accompanied the telling of their experience as outsourced employees is also expressed through their implication of the lack of importance or inclusion in the workplace. They felt as though their work and presence were a means to an end for the company to exploit. They were not regarded as individuals or regarded for their hard work, they, in essence, were only there to finish a project. At this point in time, I was almost used to the idea of not being seen as someone worth recognition. Therefore, as resistance to feeling disregarded I would push myself to work harder, finish my assignment, and then I would ask for more work. I was as proficient, quiet, and innovative as possible in order to become noticed and regarded positively. As Gibson and Graham write:

[...] the virtually unquestioned dominance of capitalism can be seen as a complex product of a variety of discursive commitments, including but not limited to organicist social conceptions, heroic historical narratives, evolutionary scenarios of social development, and essentialist phallogocentric, or binary patterns of thinking (1996 p. 4).

According to the authors, capitalism and in this case neoliberalism is predicated on the notion of individuality and personal patterns of excelling by the will of your own hands. The idea of self-worth and work-ethic is embedded and continuously woven within the

fabric of U.S. American citizenship. In other words, it is through the discursive norms of neoliberalism where we find that the meaning of self-worth is only found through doing. Therefore, the feelings of worthlessness gave my co-participants and me the drive to overcome this negative label that the full-time employees and the company willfully painted upon us with a wide brush. This was of course, an embodied instrumental rationality of neoliberalism of which we can only overcome by our own work. As an outsourced employee with Company X, there were very few moments where we felt like anything but cheap labor. Below is an excerpt where Grace talks about being a disposable worker.

LR: Now you used a word that spoke to me, and that was disposable. Can you go more into that? About that word, how you feel that relates to you or the work being done at Company X that time?

Grace: Yeah, I mean again they had more temporary workers than anything else. It was a very small select group of maybe six or seven people that were considered not from an agency. That they invested the whole interview process like you would a permanent person gave us benefits, they were investing money, but for the majority of the group they were temporary contract people. Um, I worked in that area of people I understand what the goal is. The goal is to bring somebody in to do something, and when you're done, you're done. Um, I never had a problem with that because I was a contract worker for a time, and it is like that's what you're there for, to do the work and leave, and not be promised anything. Um, I guess that was a part of the problem with this. I wasn't a contract worker.

Grace: Yes, I knew it was just a project, but at the same time it was like you've already invested something in me. Um, I can believe that now after all the time and all the money you spent on the benefits and so forth that you are just willing to dispose of me. And part of it too was personal in the sense that I had worked really hard, and to become a valued employee and to get fired permanently and to prove myself. So here all of this work of nine to eighteen months, or whatever it was, to say oh I've proved to be a good employee, but obviously that wasn't going to weigh much.

LR: So, how did you feel about that? Were you, you know upset with the company? Upset with yourself? With policy?

Grace: Mmm, um probably a little of everything

LR: Ok

Grace: Only because the company was very big and at one time privately owned and family owned and obviously that doesn't go along with the work family. It was kinda like really; you just don't like people anymore, and this is cheaper, so you're just gonna push everyone out of the door. Um, part of it was for myself because being older that's not a position I ever thought I would be in. I had always thought I'd have long employment at different companies, and uh, at this age you think wherever you are, is where you will be until you retire. Um, the thought of starting over again after that step into that company was a start over again. Um, now I'm thinking oh great now I have to do this again somewhere else.

This narrative highlights the ways in which Grace felt as though she deserved more than what the company was offering to her in terms of respect, recognition, and investment in her considering how she saw her worth. By proving herself as a hard and productive worker for the length of the project at that time. She begins this narrative by appealing to the rational or statement of her job description, one of which she states knowing what she was getting into. In other words, Grace is using the rationalization of knowing exactly what was expected of her and the confines of the job to make sense of her negative reaction to the reality of the situation. Grace is using the rigid set of expectations of the job description to negate her anger while at the same time situating herself in the righteousness of it. That negotiation of what is expected vs. personal expectations creates a complicated set of understanding of identity and self-worth. In this difficult set of understandings, the question remains of which meaning wins control over self-perception? On one hand, Grace sees her work ethic and self-worth as one where she should be respected and valued as an outstanding member of the organization. On the other hand, the company has already set the parameters of her worth based upon her temporary labor status.

Contradictory to her attempted justification of her circumstance, Grace clearly takes a very personal stance to her exclusion from the company. She tries to make sense of why her status remains on the margins of inclusion into the department, and she questions why the company has invested time, money, and training in her. At this point in her reflection, Grace only saw herself getting rejected from the company after proving her worth over and over as evident in her production. This resentment clearly stems from the neoliberal norm of requiring the *homo oeconomicus* investment of mind, body, and

spirit within the production of labor, also the materiality of feelings of achievement and worth. Wrapped up in this idea of production lies concepts of self-worth expressed by personal work ethic and materialized through the response given by others towards the finished product. Therefore, she needs appreciation to reinforce ideas of her own value. Yet due to the lack of reciprocation she feels as deserving of her worth, Grace questions her identity and the company's motivation.

In the second narrative of this theme, Arturo, a middle-aged man who identifies as Mexican American provided another context for self-worth and instead of using the word deposable he used demoralizing as an adjective to describe his feelings about the workplace.

LR: So is there anything about your experience as a temporary hire through the company that you would like to share?

Arturo: I think that if you're going to hire a temporary, there's nothing wrong with that if you provide them with a clear path to full-time employment.

LR: Okay.

Arturo: I think a company has a right to try and protect its best interest and look for the right employees and not overpay. So there's nothing wrong with a temporary employee as long as they're provided with a clear path to full-time.

LR: Mhm.

Arturo: If you're a good employee, you know, you work for six months, this is what's going to happen. But just to say "okay you're a temp we'll keep you a temp two years, three years, six months," it's not- I think it's

demoralizing for those people. I think it makes- I know it makes me feel uncomfortable that they're not treated- you know, that they don't have the same benefits that I do, yet they do the same job.

The first thing that is interesting with this narrative is the way Arturo distances himself from the agency temps as though he is not a temp himself. I start out this discussion by asking him directly about his experience as a temp. It is clear that even within the first few answers Arturo is speaking on behalf of the agency temps. The division Arturo creates is due to the fact that he was hired by the company, had benefits, and was made to feel a part of the department. However, these reasons do not negate the fact that he could have easily lost his job in the same circumstance as an agency temp. I am aware the company was very clear that even in-house temps were there on a contractual basis. But, it is easy to forget about precarity when you believe that you are a part of the organization and haven't proven your worth through production. By removing himself from the other temporary workers, he might show sympathy for their situation, but it also allows for a distraction away from the actuality of his position. As a result, laborers can become complacent when they feel special, better than, or a part of the company when making comparisons towards a perceived lower source of labor. There is then a sense of entitlement or false security enriched by the cultural separation of time, wage, and hiring practices between two differently named labor sources that are essentially doing the same work.

In another surprising turn with Arturo's narrative is his willingness to rationalize a company's right to the bottom line. He notes that it is alright for the company to protect their best interest especially in regards to employee wages. In this case is Arturo

confirming the neoliberal norms of proving to the company that you are deserving of employment and feel lucky to have it, or that the company in its personhood should protect itself from being taken advantage of by undeserving individuals? In other words, this is a key tactic within neoliberalism, to frame corporations as a person. Furthermore, where does this loyalty and responsibility for the company's wellbeing over labor come from? Simply, neoliberal discourses have shaped ideas of our meaning in the workforce and have reduced it to one where we are in a constant cycle of proving our worth to the almighty corporate judge, jury, and executioner. Therefore, it is no surprise to hear workers in a vulnerable position defend their company.

Nonetheless, Arturo does make concessions for the temporary worker by expressing a corporate responsibility to provide either clear timeframe expectations or creating a pipeline to full-time employment. If guidelines are not clearly communicated to the outsourced worker Art believes that this leads to a demoralizing feeling of self-worth. This idea is expanded upon in the next section of the interview. Again, I ask him directly about his experience as a temporary employee. In this section, he talks more about himself and once again uses the term demoralizing. However, in this instance, it is a more personal interpretation of the workplace and his positionality.

LR: So talk to me about being a temp when all this is/was happening.

Arturo: So first off, from a person level, working with my peers: I felt very uncomfortable 'cause I thought it was very unfair of the company to pay me differently than you're gonna pay a temp that is working for a temp agency because I got paid a little different because I was still a fulltime employee.

LR: Mhm.

Arturo: A temporary employee but with all the benefits of the company. Most benefits I should say. And the temporary people had none of the benefits of Company X and were working for far less money.

LR: Mhm.

Arturo: And yet they're doing the same job that I'm doing. So you know I feel bad for these people, I mean, because you know it's just a sense of moral you know moral, fair play. And you really- you feel bad because it's not fair. Um and for me personally um because I was- even though I worked for the company, I'm a temporary employee, I realize I could be let go any day, you know? So I never felt a sense of security. So no matter how your job is going you're always looking you know, next week, next month, am I gonna have a job? We all have lives to manage, budgets to manage.

LR: And you used this word as well: demoralizing. Is that a part of the strain that you were talking about?

Arturo: Oh it's an extreme part of it, an extreme part of it. Uh you know everybody's unhappy, everybody's miserable. It changes the mood and the atmosphere of the office. Um you know I think as people start not to care- and it's just really, really hard. I think fortunately a big core- a core group of the people that were hired on as temps or kept as temps were middle-aged, had a greater sense of you know just to do the job well, do the right thing.

Following the previous narrative Arturo continues his thought by addressing the other category of temporary labor. He again describes his feelings of inequity when comparing the other temps to the company hired workers. This sense of hierarchy among different exploited work groups has been a Colonial strategy effectively continuing its role within neoliberalism. However, there is still an engagement of Othering language that distinguishes the two groups in his interpretation by the use of “they” or “them.” Furthermore, he refers to himself as a fulltime employee when in fact this is not the case. Once he reaches the end of this section, it seems as though his thought pattern shifts into a more individual realization of his role as a temporary employee.

The turn to the self occurs when Arturo starts describing the actual work and how it does not differ between the two groups on temporary labor. Indeed, when we (the agency temps) got into a workflow that was manageable we no longer relied on the company temps to lead or guide us through the process. At that point in time, we all did the same exact work although slightly differing depending on the local jurisdiction and state laws. That is the moment Arturo is referring to by not only realizing that all of the outsourced employees were doing the same work, but that they were now equal in his account of the job. Referring to this moment in time, about one-third of the project had finished, and two-thirds of the agency temps had been moved to different departments or let go. Therefore, the ten of us that were left on the project became closer to the company temps in location and emotion. I was one of the three temps that they moved into the cubicles that housed the fulltime employees and the in-house temps. This statement was very clear to all of the employees in the licensing department; these are the good temps rewarded not with a promise of a career, but with a slight elevation of organizational

status. Therefore, it makes sense that Arturo no longer considers a break in the boundaries of the temp hierarchy and considers himself as one in the same as the agency temps through the production of work.

When Arturo uses the term demoralizing, he is using it as a way to describe a number of singularities that all speak to the creation of the “miserable” environment. Earlier he talked about the uncertainty of job loss due to a lack of communicating a timeframe. He furthers this notion by also including the observation of inequality in pay when the work being done is the same for all of the licensing employees. He once again circles back to job loss and the anxiety of being at the whim of the company. Finally, he concludes that because all of these factors eventually take a toll on the employees that the overall office culture suffers dramatically falling into a despairing, uncaring workplace environment. Although I know that he and all of the employees in the licensing department took upon this disposition, it is interesting to note that Arturo believes that he and the other workers that are middle-aged kept up with production even though the morale was low. In other words, they knew the value of hard work and between right and wrong. The right being working no matter what the circumstance and wrong consisting of slowing down or simply not producing and giving into the lack of worth displayed by the company. The pride in his experience and age gives him a sense of self-worth in values that were instilled in him through the American ideals of work. Or as Weber (2002) writes in his infamous essay on the Protestant work ethic, work is a rational based exercise in belief. Where Weber is specific to religion, my participants are finding their value in long held beliefs of what it means to be a citizen achieving for meritocracy.

Their work holds values of finding self-worth and the promise of full-time employment instead of heaven's rewards.

Through the discourse of neoliberal labor expectations Arturo finds pride in fitting into these standards. I interpret Arturo's actions as working through a difficult work environment which in turn, ultimately helps the company's continuous use of lower paid employees because production levels are still high. If there was a slowdown of work or a stoppage, it might make the company reassess how they treated their temporary employees. If not for the fear of being terminated for any reason we might see more of a resistance from the temps instead of them seeking self-worth by maintaining neoliberal expectations of a good worker.

Precarity. Precarity or what Lorey (2012) has defined as the state of insecurity as a part of our contemporary labor culture that is constructed from neoliberal governmentality and also a consequence of it. This milieu is born out of the drive to privatize many of the social security programs established with the Keynesian era and the reverberation of those policy decisions on the workplace. By making security insecure, neoliberal strategies begin to take root in the workplace as another technology of governmentality. The norm pertaining to the fear of losing one's job to more profitable forms of labor or downsizing became individualized as another form of discipline. In essence, the notion of precarious labor acknowledges the negative impacts of market decisions in the devaluing of labor, but misdirects anger towards the demeaning consequences, and instead takes the responsibility of becoming disposable labor. Furthermore, it is through the individual stance of accountability that many laborers

justify the reasoning behind job loss by accounting for the business drive for profit, and work harder as a testament to prove their worth and place within the organization.

Butler and Athanasiou (2013) recognize precarity as a process of acclimating a population to normalize insecurity (p. 43). They write in reference to this precarious situation,

It operates to expose a targeted demographic to unemployment or to radically unpredictable swings between employment and unemployment, producing poverty and insecurity about an economic future, but also interpellating that population as expendable, if not fully abandoned. (p.43)

While the authors are specifically addressing some of the most vulnerable populations, this uncertainty has become a reality for all divisions of labor. By incorporating precarity into the discourse of white-collar labor, researchers can take note that all forms of labor are embattled in neoliberalism's propensity for risk. Then, we can begin to analyze consequences of precarity on performance and ultimately production in the workplace. The following interview sections give us an idea of the toll precarity takes on our everyday lives and future opportunities.

Will was a part of the last wave of temps that were hired through the agency. Being younger than a majority of the labor force in the department he considered himself to have more flexibility in the job market. Furthermore, he did not have the same restrictions on his life regarding financial obligations to family, housing, car, etc. Even with all of these differences that could have easily generated a relaxed approach to the work and the uncertainty Will still found anxiety in the precarious situation of being a temporary laborer.

LR: Did you feel different as a temp versus a fulltime employee?

Will: I did but the thing about it was there was a lot more temps than there were full timers.

LR: Did you find that strange that there were so many temporary employees?

Will: Yeah, yeah, there were plenty of temporary employees. And it seemed like they were weeding them out one by one.

LR: Weeding them out, how do you mean?

Will: Well, uh, a lot of people got fired. A lot of people got moved over to a different department because they didn't quite fit in licensing. At least that's how I perceived it.

LR: And how did you interpret those folks being fired or moved?

Will: I felt like I could get fired at any moment

LR: Ok, so you felt like you could be terminated?

Will: Yeah

LR: So, how else did that affect you?

Will: Well it made it...I didn't have a steady job. At least I didn't think I had a steady job.

LR: Ok, so there is some uncertainty there?

Will: Certainly yeah.

LR: Um, what about at the company, how did you feel...as a temporary worker?

Will: Honestly? I was happy to have a real job.

Instead of feeling safe among the numbers it had the opposite effect. As the department was weeding out the temps that either did not meet production expectations

or possibly because the project was slowing down was never formally disclosed, which led to a state of fear for everyone in this temporary status. Even when Will knew that he was doing a good job, he still had fear regarding the precarity of his position. The instability works in various ways in Will's case he was constantly looking for the other shoe to drop on one hand, and on the other he was grateful for his job. This fear is something that I have heard over and over in the temp world, "I am just grateful to have a job." I want to stop and think about that phrase for a second before I continuing analyzing the impact that it has on a worker. If one is grateful to just have a position that brings in a paycheck because they have had difficulty finding a job, or they are in the middle of a recession like the people in this case study, then they might tend to put up with whatever the job entails in order to feel some sense of normalcy or security even when it is a false state of being. Therefore, when uncertainty creeps into the everyday work life, it is something that precarious laborers are willing to incorporate just to perpetuate the illusion of security.

In a continuation of the first narrative, Grace talks about precarity in her status as a temporary employee through the company, the instability of the project, and how she dealt with the uncertainty that she faced coming into the office every day.

LR: Within corporate. Do you know if you were on the same kind of pay wavelength as the full-time folks?

Grace: Um, I could have only guessed. Um, I would assume it was probably pretty close if it wasn't equal it was probably pretty close. Um, again, I was coming from a temporary or not a temporary but a part time position. Um, I was making ten dollars an hour. So, unfortunately, anything they

were giving me was huge (laughter). Um, so it was kinda like ok. I didn't really question whether it was appropriate for that position or that type of work. Um, it was also work that I had never done before, so it was kinda hard for me to get there and start questioning it.

LR: Do you think things became more efficient with all of the temps coming on, and then you know going from 18month to 12month deadline?

Grace: I...I... can't say yes or no. Again, I was only responsible for what I was given. Um, I don't even remember if we came close to that deadline. Um, a lot of it had to do with outside sources. So we didn't have to go over how it was completed because once we sent things out and we didn't get it back, we didn't get it back. Um, I think that people were just um stressed in general because you were expected to get it done.

LR: Mhmm

Grace: And again, none of us were permanent. Whether we came from an agency or not, so we were still saying, well were not permanent we don't have a guarantee of being here after the project is over. I think that some people started to feel like well who cares?

I began asking Grace about her pay compared to the full-time corporate employees to see if she made a distinction between her status as a temporary employee and theirs. Conversely, when she goes into the equality of the situation, she begins down a similar path as Will claiming that she was happy with the situation even if it was not equal. Again, the idea that a worker is satisfied with whatever she can get even if it means taking a lower payment for the same labor. Why has the U.S. labor market come

to a position of settling for less when employers can always give more? In this case, Grace did have less, and the benefits of this position offered her more. However, in comparison, she was not at the same level of the full-time workers doing the exact same production.

Companies that employ temporary labor can use existing experiences of the temps that were generally paid very little required low-skilled work and involved an extreme turnover rate to their advantage. When you are given an opportunity to have a better paying position, one that uses more of your skillset, and has a long-term agreement, and then one can easily feel grateful and happy opposed to someone who could receive more. You essentially take out the bargaining possibility for the worker by giving enough that they are appreciative to get out of a bad situation and into one that seems more beneficial to them as a skilled laborer with more financial stability. Furthermore, by building the employees self-worth and sense of consistency corporations can take advantage of these labor pools and keep them at a lower rate and flexible status to uphold the bottom line on labor costs.

The second half of this section of the narrative jumps into the temps and deadline of the project. Grace talks a little about the pressure of getting the project finished within the timeframe that was imposed by the Vice President of Accounting. However, she points out the irony of pushing oneself to the point of stress while knowing that you are working yourself out of a job. While some of the employees took on a “who cares?” attitude it could have been a response to feeling unappreciated and fear of losing a sense of normalcy. This feeling is a significant reaction to precarity in the workplace. If there is a slowdown then you can keep your job a bit longer, on the other hand, if you stop caring

about your work or the project when the inevitable time comes to leave then it might not emotionally affect you as much. Again, I see this as a coping mechanism with a dash of resistance thrown in. In a way, it is a resistive tactic to find agency within a situation where you have no control. It is also self-preservation by either prolonging employment or protecting your emotional wellbeing.

Grace further articulates how she protected herself below. She ends this section of questioning by explaining her options of preservation.

LR: Ok. How did you, um, how did you feel during that period?

Grace: Um, I kinda went back and forth, um, in the beginning, it was like it was a job, it was a paycheck. They expect me to do this and get this done. Um, for a while I went through a period of do I work to get it done so I can go find another job somewhere else? Do I try to blow their socks off with how well I did, and how much I got done? Um, and as time went on throughout the project, I went more that route. I'm going to keep working hard to get it done and do it right because maybe somebody will see me as invaluable keep me in that department, some other department, that project, something else. Um, obviously the company is huge, and I felt like it was a lot of opportunity that could potentially be there.

LR: So you took it upon yourself

Grace: Yes

LR: To prove yourself to the higher ups....

Grace: Exactly

This section on the interview is one of the more important statements from the participants in illuminating the importance of precarity to the neoliberal workspace. Grace gives us an opening to how all of the participants reacted to the precarious situation of losing their job once the project was completed. I go more into this behavior in the next chapter because there are two turns in the idea of working hard to prove oneself where in this instance there is only one. The turn of direction comes at the very beginning of the narrative where Grace questions what she should do. Should she look at this job as a temporary placement, do her job no more, no less, or does she turn down the other avenue, the one that is a bit curvier and precarious to prove that she has the drive to complete the project with determination and proficiency? Why is the turn to prove herself in hopes to be perceived as invaluable to the department? In many ways feeling a sense of accomplishment in work build on the positive feelings of self-worth, however, as a primary outcome of working to prove oneself is to diminish the loss of control within precarity. Again, is a way to find control or agency within the idea that there is a possibility of more secure employment because how can they possibly let someone as competent and dedicated to their job go?

When these temps took it upon themselves to work harder and prove their worth to alleviate some of the uncertainty and fear of job loss they acted on their own. There was no reinforcement or guarantee from our supervisors regarding permanent employment. While they were happy with the quality of work, this never equated with any assurance. It still does not make sense to me that without a finite goal, we worked towards a possibility that was at best a long shot. The only solution that has come close to explaining this behavior is the idea that the discourses of work have become so embodied

that the overwhelming choice is to perform at high levels of production. With these expectations of work, employers are able to exploit temporary laborers by continuing to pay them at a lower level, dangling the proverbial carrot of employment, all while keeping them in a constant state of insecurity to prove their worth.

Companies, in other words, can get high-quality work out of highly skilled temporary workers at a fraction of the price because many of these workers already step through the cubical with the knowledge of how they should perform labor expectations. They also arrive with the hope that this position could potentially lead to a full-time career and a steady income. All of these factors shape the temp industry, the companies that hire, and the labor itself. Yet, the power to create the culture of the temporary worker entirely depends, survives, and thrives on precarity.

Some of the references to precarity in the interviews included describing behaviors such as feeling grateful but then also searching for a new job on company time, working harder to prove irreplaceability, venting frustration at the lunch table about feeling insecure, and working overtime to show loyalty to the department while playing on the internet. While these acts had a resistive quality in their reactions, it was not enough to take away from the actual production outcomes. In actuality, this was more of a coping mechanism in order to keep performing their work so they would not give the department a reason to terminate their employment. The small acts of resistance to their precarious existence did little to negate the embodied need to work hard to prove oneself as irreplaceable with the prospect of full-time employment. Therefore, it makes sense to end with performance as the final interview theme. While self-worth gives insight into temporary labor's emotional state, and precarity explains the environment in which the

workers have to reside, performance provides us with the material outcomes of production as informed by how the worker can produce labor while faced with emotional and situational uncertainty.

Performances of work. As a continuation of the discussion of the neoliberal circulation of norms from the previous chapter, performance completes the exchange. Performance in this sense closes the transmission of neoliberal power by putting into praxis the embodied discursive norms. Additionally, performances of norms allow for discursive patterns to continue to negotiate and make sense of embodied discourses by disciplining and communicating socially with other bodies. Discursive construction takes cues and knowledge from the actions and interpretations of norms through these bodily acts. Gibson and Graham contend that, “These bodily essences structure a field which is itself the very map of Man, an economy that is organically interconnected, hierarchically organized and engaged in a process of self-regulated reproduction” (1996, p. 102). Specifically, we can read the body and the performance of work as social signs of a good or model employee, one that others should emulate or fall short of the expectations of the workplace. In an open cubical setting such as the one at Company X and common within most corporations, employees are able to see and access the work habits of their colleagues. This observation, in turn, allows social interaction that can control and discipline through the watchful gaze and comparisons.

The competitive norm we have distinguished as a trait of the *homo oeconomicus* informs performances of the workplace by pushing each person to prove their worth to themselves, other co-workers, and managers by monitoring and then outperforming through production. The constant surveillance allows managers release supervising

behaviors to team members. Furthermore, if the gaze of control is not enough to create an air of uneasy suspicion, water cooler conversations implicating underperforming co-workers can also discipline an employee to “get in line” with the rest of the department.

Performances of labor through precarious situations such as offshoring and outsourcing provide a particular area of study for communication scholars interested in the impacts of governmentality from a discursive position on the labor and production. Performance in this sense is regulated to the movements that engage the body into producing material outcomes. Lorey (2012) defining the meaning of materiality in performance writes, “Although the materiality of performative – virtuoso labor is not oriented to the traditional production of products, this does not mean that it is without materiality. It is a materiality not only of performative bodies, but also of subjectivations and socialities” (p. 84). Similarly, to the virtuoso, a majority of the work being conducted by the service industry can be classified as immaterial. However, the outcomes of this labor produce material effects for many of the employees and consumers. In accordance with labor commodity production, discourse is also able to produce a materiality of the laborer by working in conjunction with various institutional and technological practices to produce meaning. Power is then able to flow and reinforce hegemonic norms by the sociality of discourse, individualization of embodiment, and the combination through the praxis of performance, thereby creating and constituting the neoliberal citizen. This theme provides an explanation pertaining to the impacts of outsourcing and how labor can perform their work at high levels even when faced with precarity and uncertainty of job security.

The next interview excerpts talk about how labor was affected by both being a temp and working with temps. Many of the in-house temps were put into supervisory positions while also required to maintain their workload. This maintenance put extreme pressure to work at an unrealistic pace while continually proving themselves to be invaluable workers. Below the first narrative will explain the background of the work being conducted at the time while the second describes the mental and emotional impact of the work.

LR: Okay. Um was your work performance affected when they brought in all these temps?

Arturo: Um, my work performance changed I mean because I had more of a leadership role.

LR: Mhm

Arturo: Than actually, you know, doing the applications I was more overseeing people, so it changed in that respect. But as far as you know how I viewed myself with the company didn't really change.

LR: So you still did your work and you trained at the same time?

Arturo: Did my work, trained, and supervised, right.

LR: Okay. And how was the workload?

Arturo: It varied. There were times where it was extremely heavy and then there were times that it wasn't so heavy because you had to get all the applications out but once you get them out, now you're in limbo, in a holding pattern waiting for all the information to come back to you.

LR: So, I want you to go back sequentially from when you were hired to when the temps were brought on, to when the first offshoring, second offshoring. How did your work habit flow during these periods of time? As far as how was your performance or how do you rate your performance?

Arturo: Well I think- I still rate my performance high, and that's just because me as an individual. You know, I've always tried to do a good job. I was upset, and you know demoralized but I still tried to do the best job I could.

LR: Mhm

Arturo: When we were training them that was probably the most difficult time because it was just an overload of work. It was frustrating, and they couldn't understand. It was frustrating having to go back three, four times to retrieve certain data because the corporation would ask for different things instead of asking for everything at once and were constantly backtracking. That was a big issue for me.

In this section of the interview, I wanted to know how the participants understood their work and how they perceived their performance. In this area, discussing outsourcing, the participants saw their performance as something where they could find pride. They interpreted the increased workload as the company entrusting them with importance. Performance is the material result of both self-worth and feelings of precarity. In this sense, increasing the workload was not something to get frustrated with it was an act of trust or a reward for producing good work. On the other hand, the increased workload of training the temps and completing their list of responsibilities did

take a toll on the participants in this role. Like Arturo, the other in-house temps that trained saw themselves in a leadership role that was vital to the company. The dissonance that was created between feeling an integral part of the project and the reality of being inundated with an impossible workload eroded self-worth with a lack of appreciation on the part of the company.

The disregard for the workers came in the form of undervaluing work performance by not showing appreciation in the form of verbal rewards or assurances that they could count on their performances leading to full-time employment. Also, the sense of self-worth was pushed to the breaking point due to the additional work and the unrealistic expectations set forth by the participants deriving from their earlier high levels of work performance. It was increasingly difficult for my participants to feel honored, happy, and rewarded with more responsibilities when they felt that they were not able to prove their worth to themselves and the company due to their deteriorating perception of their work performance.

Arturo wanted to make certain that I understood his work performance was always at the highest levels because his work ethic is intrinsic to him as a person. In other words, his work performance is so essential to his understanding of himself that it makes up the material reflection of his being. In actuality, neoliberal norms are embodied to such a degree that the performances of production are one of the few ways to determine worth as a citizen. He equated high levels of production to his value of himself, within the company, and to society as a whole. This level of work performance gave Arturo a sense of self, which was defined by not just his work, but the success of his production.

I am highlighting the ways in which discourses of work has taken on such an evasive embodied role within our constructions of identity that in particular moments of precarity, it takes on the dominant definition of self. In this case, we are defined by the work as much as we were undefined by the uncertainty of work. Arturo and the rest of us wanted to find meaning in our work, something we could be proud of even when feeling demoralization from the uncertainty. I for one would always come home and tell my friends about a store I completed in Illinois as a sense of pride that I licensed a store in my hometown. The work, the feeling of accomplishment, and the pride I felt completing a store license always gave me a sense of self-worth within my production value. For a moment, we could feel proud before once again the crushing stress of job insecurity came back into focus. The performance of work in a lot of ways was a diversion to the constant underlining fear of not coming back to work the next day. Performance is the juncture when we can find identity because there is a level of autonomy in how you produce or do work. For us, production became a refuge from fear, gossip, and depreciation even within an increase of workload. We had something to prove, and our proof materialized in production.

In the next interview, Grace takes on an additional perspective of her experience during this time. In the interview, a lot more dissatisfaction with the company comes through in her narrative as opposed to Arturo, who only briefly mentions the department. Grace also shares her frustration towards herself and her perception of not fulfilling her performance expectations. This longer section of Grace's narrative combines a complex set of emotions surrounding precarity of the situation, neoliberal norms that define Grace as a person, how she was able to cope with the overwhelming workload, and

rearticulating of her work performance as she binds it with her identity. Furthermore, this interview is most likely bringing in more discontent with the precarity of the workplace because we are bridging the conversation between her temporary status and the impending action to offshore the department and project. While the introduction of the next set of circumstances is initiated in this section, it is important to note that there was already an undercurrent of frustration pervading the culture of the workspace and quality of performance before we even enter into the next area of impact.

LR: And how did you perform your work during this entire experience?

Grace: Uh, I guess I got it done, and I guess I did an ok job. Uh, but it is always in the back of your head all day long of maybe I just shouldn't be going home tonight, maybe I should be looking for another job. You know maybe I should be updating my resume, maybe I should pull out right now. I kinda had that back and forth feeling almost on a daily basis because some days I went in thinking I know what I'm doing, I'm doing a good job. Other days I thought who cares obviously they don't. Will it matter? And unfortunately that's not the type of person I am, in general, I wasn't brought up that way. I was brought up to do a good job regardless, um, so I was kinda torn between that does it really matter if I get this done because they've got people waiting to do it.

Before going too far into the narrative, I would like to stop at this first part to analyze Grace's actions during this period of increased workload and pressure to finish the project within a rigorous timeframe to set up the department as compatible for the offshoring firm. This situation caused an even greater increase in workload to where

everyone was required to put in overtime. It was also at this time where many of the temporary employees that were still on the project had become a long-term temps of at least eight months. Therefore, many of the in-house temps have been working in the department for over a year. Each day, week, month, and the year they worked and performed to both feel a sense of significance and to prove that they were worth keeping as a full-time employee. This imminent decision formulating through the executive offices of the company made it clear that did not care or notice the hard work of all of the temps who were producing all of the retail store licenses at a high level of production. The discount, as one might imagine, had a devastating effect on the temps and the departmental culture. Therefore, it is no surprise that Grace questioned her work performance as well as her place in the company, and her performance suffered as a result.

In an attempt to find some security or control in the situation Grace debated looking for another job. Even within her anger and fear, she still continued to perform her work. It might not have been at the level she expected of herself, she still performed her work. She felt secure in the performance of work and the quality of which she produced on most days. On others when she questioned the precarity of her position where it could have affected the quality of her performance, Grace resisted acting upon her frustration with the simple realization that she was not that type of person, was not raised that way, and she valued doing good work no matter the circumstance. This account of the dissidence surrounding feeling undervalued and knowing that the “right” thing to do is to work hard because that is the type of person you provide the clearest material performance of the *homo oeconomicus*. No matter what, you need to work hard to prove

to yourself, what, that you deserve to be a citizen, valued member of society, an actualized person? These are powerful discourses of neoliberal control that shape our understandings of the economic position of our body, identity, and mind.

Grace may have had a dualistic thought process about what was happening to her; she followed the neoliberal norms so embodied and continued to perform and produce. In the next section of the interview, Grace gives a representation of her workload and work performance.

LR: Umm, so going back to what you said before where your workload increased. How did you approach the increase in workload?

Grace: Um, I guess I got it done because I'm efficient.

LR: Ok

Grace: I'm very organized. A lot of people were overwhelmed by how much was coming at them. I tend to be of a personality of if you don't start thinking through it, you won't get it done.

LR: Mhmm

Grace: Um, I was not happy with the quality of my work.

LR: Mhmm

Grace: I can tell you that. Uh, I try not to be anal, but I think, I think, I already know what I can accomplish and make it look great. Um, I was probably doing an ok job to a good job.

LR: Mhmm

Grace: As opposed to a great job because I tend to think of everything at one time, and organize itself so that everything happens concisely and happens

in a rhythm where I'm not losing any time. I'm a huge time management person.

LR: Mhmm

Grace: So, I never looked at my work as well I nailed that. Well, I was always looking at it as if I nail that now I can get this done now. It was always readjusting things at a much faster rate which made me feel like I wasn't doing quality work. And, I can tell you probably a dozen different things that I did wrong, or I did incompletely which normally wouldn't happen.

LR: Mhmm

Grace: Because I felt under the gun of the time, and getting more done than I would normally have done in a day because everything became sloppy. Um, and I found it unusual that they just kinda looked at that was ok, and I was thinking, I don't see how that can be ok.

LR: Mhmm

Grace: Because when you make a mistake you lose time, and then you have to do something over. To me, that makes no sense. Um, so I guess I got done, but the stress was enormous because again you come home not feeling like you've done a good job. And, and you come home not feeling like you've accomplished anything because half the time I didn't remember what I did all day. It was all coming at me so fast, and I was pushing it out so fast that people ask me now, I don't remember any of that, you know?

LR and Grace: (laughter)

Grace: It was like a big black hole. Where again it's not my personality. I can tell you the name of projects that I've worked on since the day that I was hired. But yet there are projects now, and think what was that? And, there's just too many holes for me, where normally that wouldn't be. So I don't really think that I did my best work.

While Grace is not specific about the work that she was conducting at the time, she did give a clear picture of the amount of work and the pressure she was under. She finds pride and self-worth within her approach and management of the workload. At this point, it was not about the actual work and more about how she was able to handle it. As mentioned above, during this period Grace was also having an internal struggle with herself and whether she should care about her performance of her production. Lazzarato (2014) argues that the weakness in capitalism is in its ability to produce subjectivity. He writes, "As a consequence, systemic crisis and the crisis in the production of subjectivity are strictly interlinked. It is impossible to separate economic, political, and social processes from the process of subjectivation occurring within them" (p. 8). However, I would argue that Lazzarato might contend that there is a weakness as a potential fissure point for resistance, Furthermore, neoliberalism effectively subjugates based upon a crisis in self by insisting that the laborer incorporate norms such as whiteness and femininity with increased discipline. Thus, it is clear through her behavior that the neoliberal discourse of self through work has won out, and Grace sees this aspect of her work production as a challenge to be achieved.

She compares herself to other colleagues and finds satisfaction in the ways that she can better manage the workload in comparison. Grace identifies herself as efficient, organized, and a forward thinker in her approach to work. Despite all of these positive connotations, Grace still finds fault with the quality of her work.

Grace's reflection of her performance moves the narrative away from the positive attributes she listed and into the underlining focus of how performances of work shape understandings of our value in the labor economy. In her simple statement of not being happy, Grace conveys her dissatisfaction with herself as well as frustration with the workload. She took the admonishment of herself and instead of negotiating the workload she pushed herself to work harder. This action seems counterproductive to her best interests and works directly with neoliberal norms of getting as much production as possible out of labor to control cost. By self-regulating, Grace performs to secure her identity within white femininity as a good worker in addition to creating more profit for the company through the added pressure that she puts on herself. The company will never have to confront her about the quality of work, and in fact, they seem happy with it. She, however, is unhappy and strives for better results by adjusting and readjusting her performance for efficiency, which allows neoliberalism to function at the individual level of self-control.

Further on in the narrative we can see that the self-regulation was not contained to the cubical. Grace brought her feelings about work home where she continued to reflect on her performance of work. What is also interesting is along with her feelings of not being a good employee, she was also trying to find meaning in her work. After stating her displeasure for the quality of work, Grace became visibly upset about not remembering

the projects that she was working on. By not recognizing her performance Grace loses a sense of self that comes from that identity formation informed by work. She equates the loss of work identification as a dysfunction of the pressure to perform and not inherent to her personality. While I use identity as a way to describe how my participants find self-worth through work, Grace similarly understands the discontinuity of this moment as not a part of her personality. In this case, we can conclude that identity and personality are synonymous. She concludes that not only was her performance not up to her expectations, but she herself was in a dissonant state with her lack of meaning associated with work. If I were to cut out the proposition of quality of work, we can conclude that Grace would have been happy despite the quality of performance if she found significance in the production. The paradox of efficiency versus inefficiency drives Grace to do the work in a timely manner but without happiness derived from feelings of accomplishment.

In the last section of this narrative, Grace gives a third perspective on this specific moment in our work history, compensation. In the previous sections, Grace spoke about job performance and not being able to find meaning in the crushing workload. In this section, she describes how the department attempted to reward the employees based upon financial compensation. However, as she explains, the financial incentives did not entirely produce the desired result of the department. They were able to expand production, but they fell short of creating a positive organizational culture.

LR: So, so while you were doing this work, did you like skip lunch, or did you stay later?

Grace: Um, we did over time. I know management felt that was the answer

LR: Ok

Grace: And, they felt if you're getting paid more money, aren't you happy?

LR: Mhmm

Grace: Um, I can tell you nobody was happy.

LR: Ok

Grace: It wasn't the money. It was again; I think maybe people felt the same way I did, that this is not my quality of work. I feel like I'm rushing. I feel like I'm throwing things every which way. Um, the disorganization in the department. I mean people's desk, people's papers on the floor, and people always just like, I don't know. (laughter). You felt bad because it was like you have this work and somebody would just stare at you, like what? Are you talking to me? Everyone seemed like they hadn't slept in weeks. Because it was just such disorganization. And everyone felt bad for each other. I had a girl sitting next to me last January that broke down in tears because she didn't think she was going to get it done. I just remember thinking, it's not that important. And that's something that never would have come out of my mouth before because I take pride in what I do. I don't look at work as just whatever. So I felt bad for her that she was feeling that much stress that she couldn't even keep it together at her desk. And, that's horrible, and she was embarrassed. I was thinking don't be embarrassed we all probably on the verge of tears at one point or another. We just managed just to laugh it off or suck it up, or I don't know, walk out the door for a walk because we are just like oh my god. And I don't I

don't see again where they feel like, that's such a great place to work, and aren't you glad that you're here.

The extra workload increased to a point where it was impossible for everyone to finish his/her job during the eight-hour workday. As mentioned earlier, with the preparation for the offshore contractors coming into assess the possibility of moving the department to India, the timetable for the licensing project was pushed up. Therefore, the company asked for the department to pay time and a half and encourage overtime. Clearly Grace was dissatisfied with what the company thought was a good solution to the expedited timeline. Still, at this point, extra compensation was not what the participants needed. They wanted assurances from the department that their work had not gone unnoticed, and needed assurances that they were not being taken for granted. If the precarity of the situation lessened to where the participants felt more certain about having future employment, I believe that they would have received the news of overtime as an opportunity instead of punishment.

Grace turned to the disappointment surrounding the performance of her work instead of actualizing the reasons for her frustration with the precarity. Again, there is some sense of control when it comes to how your body produces labor because there is a possibility of choice within your actions. When considering the embodied effects of neoliberal discourses of work, those choices become limited. However, there is enough potentiality of control through performance that it leads to space where laborers can focus their emotions. Work provides a material actualization of how the participants were managing to be a temporary employee in a very precarious position. Compensation at this

point was not going to replace the fear and frustration the participants felt towards being on an increasingly unpredictable timeline.

The increase in the time and a half pay also did not decrease the overworked state that the participants found themselves. As Grace explains, the office and the employees were in a state of disarray. The papers all over the floor and desks only verified the stress, frustration, and lack of work/life balance that everyone was going through to increase production. The moment when Grace lost meaning in her work came when one of her colleagues broke down from the stress, lack of sleep, and unrealistic production expectations. Though, when she questioned the importance of the work she quickly repressed her thoughts by counteracting them with the notion of self. In other words, by proclaiming that is not who she is, and that she takes pride in her work gave Grace only a moment to disagree with neoliberal norms that create the *homo oeconomicus*. As a result of her overworked position, she empathized with her co-worker, questioned the importance of the production, and disagreed with management's assertion that Company X was a great place to work. This moment was a turning point for her. It allowed Grace a space to feel frustrated with the company, her work, and her precarious situation. However, we explore in the next chapter how she continued to perform at high levels of production despite her negatives emotions associated with work. Neoliberal techniques in addition to discourses of finding identity in work embody enough power to control workers into moving back in line with the fear of losing who they intrinsically are by performing inadequate labor. Consequently, they return to their normative selves by continuing to produce instead of enacting a slowdown or quitting.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the intention of letting the participants define this area of the project through their own words starting with the overall concept of outsourcing.

Outsourcing, as explained by the participants, is defined as conditional employment with temporary employees brought into the company to work on a particular project. In this case, the temporary workers were brought in as in-house temps and agency contractors.

Outsourcing situates this chapter as a descriptive phenomenon that initiates the exploration into white-collar performances of labor during a very precarious moment in the participant's work history. Being a temporary laborer gives us insight into how these particular folks are able to cope, understand, identify, and produce when the fear of unemployment and loss of control is always present. In the first and second sections of the interview data, there is a sense of hope and drive to prove themselves in order for the department to find them worthy of a permanent placement. Additionally, the participants found a sense of identity and meaning by performing work as a reflection and confirmation of their worth as citizens.

As temporary employees, they had to contend with feeling disposable because of their outsider and impermanent status. Disposability formed the theme of self-worth by articulating meanings of knowing that you are temporary, or are only hired so the organization can use your ability to produce until the production levels run out. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) contend that disposability is an assigned aspect of precarity. They observe assigned disposability as follows, "[...] since precarity, understood as a vulnerability to injury or loss, can never be reversed (this I tend to call precariousness), and yet the differential ways of allocating precarity, of assigning disposability, are clearly

aims and effects of neoliberal forms of social and economic life” (pp. 20-21). As the authors argue, feeling as though you can be thrown away at any moment give the participants a drive to prove that they are worth more as workers and subsequently individuals. They fought off the feelings of being disposable by finding a sense of accomplishment and self-worth in their performances of work. Yet, as the second theme of precarity forced the participants to reside in its constant state of insecurity the borders of performing neoliberal norms of labor or questioning the meanings of those performances started to erode.

While examining the importance and significance of work allowed for a new space of inquiry where the participants had the possibility to mitigate the power of the organization by resisting production expectations they always returned to the center of labor norms as though they were defined by the extraordinary work produced. In this regard, the performance of work dominated the ways in which the participants defined their identity and found self-worth. In the last theme of the chapter, performance is not demarcated by a particular word or concept it formed through the act of doing labor. I chose performance as the last theme in order to allow the body to complete the materialization of discourse and embodiment of labor through the actualization of labor production. The thoughts, feelings, and state of being are expressed through the body and how it approaches work. Furthermore, the act of performance then informs emotions on what they should feel in the state of insecurity. In other words, if the performance were satisfactory then the participant would feel value in themselves despite the precarious space and would continue to produce to maintain the positive reinforcement. Thus, the material consequence of neoliberalism is within a performed economy.

All three themes of self-worth, precarity, and performance unite to create a symbolic account of what it means to be a temporary worker in a Fortune 500 company. In the last section of the chapter, the participants slowly begin to lose meaning associated with work. This loss occurs for a number of reasons: unrealistic production expectations, increased overtime, feeling unappreciated, and the increase of precarity due to the preparation to offshore the entire department. The next chapter continues with this analysis and furthers the narrative by bringing the project into the second event, living through offshoring as an outsourced employee. The account, of this moment in the workplace, constructs new and challenging paths to full-time status for the participants to navigate.

CHAPTER FOUR: OFFSHORING

This chapter addresses the other side of the case study, offshoring. While outsourcing finds its labor population within the borders of the United States, offshoring looks for cheaper labor on a global scale. When corporations use offshoring to cut labor costs to drive profits, they transfer entire divisions to a vendor company that specializes in skilled labor. Offshoring continues to drive costs down particularly in the information technology sectors and in the service industry as a whole. As a core value of neoliberalism, labor must be flexible and fluid. De Peuter (2011) defines flexibility as follows, “Flexibilization of labor is instituted from above, with employers and the neoliberal states supporting them motivated to transfer market risk to individual workers and to shave indirect labor costs” (p. 420). In this regard, work is no longer confined to the cubical in the location where the organization resides. An employee can take work on the road, work from home, video conference in, or pull their phone out of their pocket to answer emails. In other words, labor is no longer stabilized in one area or location. Technology is vital for neoliberalism to stretch its reach into all aspects of life, including the unregulated impact of work in the private sphere. This intrusion of flexibility is how offshoring thrives and develops new skilled sources of cheaper labor.

With the proliferation of offshoring to countries such as India, growth in higher education continues to expand and prosper. The offshoring companies that acquire labor for the service industry are attracted to highly educated individuals that have a high level of competency in their skill set. Of course, the emergent industry of offshoring creates an economic cycle of bringing wealth into developing economies which enforces the need for higher education, and subsequently grows the middle class. There are economists who argue that offshoring is good for the economy and helps developing nations bring in wealth. However, most countries give corporations a ten-year tax break in order to persuade industry to produce there. My question is what happens when that ten-year period is up? How does this shift in the labor economy affect U.S. workers? Furthermore, what is the toll of the U.S. labor exploitation of the developing countries workforce? While this project primarily focuses on the state of U.S. white-collar labor, it is important to note the ultimate exploitation of global labor due to neoliberal offshoring policies. These impacts cannot reside neatly within borders; they reverberate precarity throughout the entire population of service industry employees.

This chapter is broken down into the three thematic areas defined in Chapter Three that help us understand the effects of offshoring on the micro level of the workplace. The themes of self-worth, precarity, and performance create delineations that allow for different viewpoints of offshoring, and how the participants narrate their experiences and coping strategies. Similar to the last chapter in regards to thematic analysis, the narratives contain more anger and animosity towards Company X. I have concluded that the turn from the optimistic view of obtaining a full-time position by working hard to one of disenfranchisement came at the cost of losing voice and agency

with the decision to offshore the department. The participants and the leadership of the licensing department shared their concerns to the upper management without acknowledgement. Realizing that the concerns from employees did not result in any sort of recognition, my participants felt as though they did not matter -- that they were just numbers that resulted in leeching away profit margins. Along with the disregard management showed to the department, they commenced offshoring by bringing in an offshoring company that specializes in moving information technology labor to India.

The decision to offshore the department came after the company successfully offshore areas of the accounting division to India. It made strategic sense for the company to move to the licensing department in their next phase, since it fell under accounting within the organizational chart. As many people tried to explain, licensing work is not formulaic labor like accounting. The company made the decision and then began to prepare the department for offshoring during the beer and wine project where many of the employees were still temporary workers. Therefore, the phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring converged at the same moment making this a very complex and extraordinary site of analysis. Below, the participants explain the context of offshoring through the account of being a temporary worker and working through this new development of precarity.

Will and Beth give a description of the beginning of offshoring from their perspective. Again, it is important to note that because they are both temporary employees, the precarity that they felt before this situation has now evolved into an even greater presence in their work life. The working hard to be rewarded or recognized by the

company has now hit a road block with the incorporation of offshoring. Will gives his account of what he observed in the beginning of the process.

LR: So, not only at this point you are a temporary employee from the project. They then throw a wrench in the project and bring in contractors to try to offshore the entire department to India. So what were some of the challenges you faced regarding the possible offshoring of the department?

Will: Well I guess the first thought is I lose my job. Um, no one ever came up with uh, this is an experiment, this is a trial period. They made it seem pretty clear this is the way they are going to go.

LR: Ok.

Will: Obviously that is frustrating in and of itself to lose your job. I was just getting to the point, I thought, I kinda had made it past (laughter), the initial part of it. Thinking ok now I've been here pretty long and I didn't have any issues with my work. So, I was kinda getting the comfort feeling of, ok I've met a lot of people. Everyone seems really nice; it seems like a good company. Kinda was pushing towards getting hired and doing something with at the end. Then they dropped the bomb of, this is what we are going to do. And again, it wasn't like we are just going to see. It as this is what we are going to do.

LR: Did they give any explanation as to why they wanted to offshore the department?

Will: Um, unfortunately they had already started the process with the accounting group. And they, the company, looked at the accounting group

as very disposable. You know how to do accounting or you don't. Everything is a black and white type of position, and it's easy to offshore that because we can find other people in other parts of the world that can do the same exact thing for less. Unfortunately, our department was kinda a step child of the accounting group. They didn't fully know where to put that kinda work. The work we were doing couldn't fit into a department or an area. Um, the work we do is not accounting it's not black and white. So, how did this fit. So no one understood that. So that was aggravating in and of itself, and then for them to be like, this is how this is going to work and this is what we are going to do, and that was like the bottom line.

Interpreting Will's explanation, I first have to consider the tone of the narrative. In this instance, Will has become frustrated to the point of anger towards the situation itself and having to relive his experience through narrative. The first thought Will concluded was the fact that he would lose his job through no fault of his own. For someone who performed at high levels of production throughout difficult circumstances in order to prove his viability, being faced with an imperishable barrier created a tense approach to the job. The corporation moved forward with the plan to offshore despite the resistance from the workers. This sent a message to the department that was loud and clear, we are going to make this happen to improve profits, and we do not care about how you feel or what the outcome is regarding your employment.

Knowing the company stance on offshoring, Will uses a central concept from the last chapter, disposable. This added another layer of disposability but not without a fight. All of the participants that interviewed spoke up to their supervisors, the director, and

vice president of accounting explaining that licensing work was not the same as accounting. There were very few licenses that had the same application process, there was no consistency to the work. Some licenses just required a licensing specialist to fill in the blank questions, add the required paperwork, and provide signatures. On the other end of the work spectrum, we would have to schedule store manager finger prints with the local law enforcement, have them conduct background checks, schedule a hearing with the town hall, inspections of the store, send the governmental affairs person to talk to the mayor, provide the local jurisdiction with personal information of the executive officers, send the annual report, and coordinate this process entirely over the phone with the person in charge of issuing licenses on the local level. Needless to say, the work varied in intensity and scope.

Beth, who identifies as a white woman in her 60's, was employed with a national hotel chain for twenty-five years before she was laid off. After three weeks of collecting unemployment insurance, Beth became an in-house temporary for Company X. She describes the background of the offshoring attempt as follows:

LR: So when you heard that folks from India were probably coming in and this was a good possibility that they were trying to offshore to India. How-what were your initial reactions?

Beth: Uh, my initial reaction was after actually talking to the director of the department that this probably was not going to happen. So once again, I felt I was being given assurances, not by general office talk, but by the powers that be in decision making areas that this still was not going to be an issue. So I was really not all really concerned. I mean I was probably

pretty ticked off that I didn't know about this 'cause again I might have made a different decision as far as going back to my old job or not. I couldn't tell you now after the fact that I would've done that. Probably, I'd have a job (laughs). Um but I still felt that I had enough assurances at this point that I needed to get on with my job. And to be honest with you that's the kind of person that I am. I'm not a glass half full; I'm a half empty I mean I'm a glass half full kinda person. I don't look ten years down the road and say these bad things are gonna happen. It's let's do the job at hand, let's do the job well, and that way you'll have more opportunity if there is an opportunity.

LR: So what was your observations with the arrival of people from the offshoring company?

Beth: When they came- and I think there were about 15 people including or additionally three or four supervisors that came with them who had been to the company as an advanced team. They were here before for a couple of months to assess the process so that they could write a procedure for when their employees came here and had to do the training. I think the training was supposed to take place for 90 days, and I think they came in November. And um right away there was probably, not so much personality if some cultural differences, that made it difficult. It was difficult from the standpoint of they had a job to do regardless. Now, some other Company X employees that were assigned to them had this extra work that they wouldn't be able to accomplish because all licensing is on a

deadline. But the people who were training these had literally no space at all themselves. So they were not allowed to basically even sit at their desk until that person arrived that day. And those people's hours had to coincide you know with theirs you know? But they didn't have five minutes to turn on their computer and kind of get settled at their desk. And that was very stressful and they eventually relented a little bit on that, gave them a little bit of time before that person would come that day. And I would say most of the employees from the outsourcing company that came over were highly trained individuals from the standpoint of education. I think most of them had various degrees. I mean some of them might have been engineers, or you know had math degrees. They were smart people; you know? And they were, I would hope, given some insight before they left India as to what to expect. But how they are treated in the two countries is so terribly different that it was disturbing to the country. It would be nothing to see their supervisor literally strike one of their employees. I mean they didn't smack them but they would hit their arm if they were displeased with them like that. And that is one thing that management quickly picked up on and told them that would not be tolerated, that is not a thing that happens in a US corporation and you can't do that.

This narrative is important for the context of offshoring in a number of ways. First, Beth is able to give an account of how she was managed to comprehend the situation through assurances of her supervisors. Second, she overviews a bit of how the offshoring

employees were trying to create a systematic approach to the work in order to recreate it in India. Third, she gives a brief description of how the licensing employees were reacting to the intrusion of their work. Fourth, there is a point to describe the cultural differences and interactions. All of these distinct areas of explanation allow for a clear idea of how the participants in this study broke down the intrusion of offshoring. By denying the inevitability, they were able to continue to pursue the opportunity for full-time employment. Furthermore, as we will see in the thematic narratives, the participants argue that offshoring cannot be successful due to the complexity of work.

Beth felt as though the offshoring project would never commence for a variety of reasons, the leading being the assurances given by her supervisors. The guarantee is a tactic that works in two ways, by diminishing fear in the workplace so production can remain steady, and it also reassures everyone involved that should not question or concern themselves with this precarity. When workers are left in a precarious position of losing agency, they turn to the security of finding self-worth within their work ethic. This neoliberal discourse has become so embodied that it provides a safe haven for laborers to find security. It also offsets the reaction to question or take action against the company's willingness to replace them with a cheaper labor source. Thereby, maintaining a controlled workplace where the workers regulate themselves through their dedication to this neoliberal discourse. Rationality has ruled in favor of the potential reward for working hard. This consequence is upheld with how Beth looks back at the situation and questions her decision to stay in the licensing position instead of returning to her old job.

In the next part of the interview, I asked Beth to give an idea of what the office looked like when the offshore people arrived from India. She described the influx of

people coming in to learn how the department performed their work and if it could be replicated. They attempted to create a systematic plug-and-play handbook in order to standardize production process. If the offshoring company was able to identify an easy way to transfer the work for one of their workers to take over, then the decision to offshore the department would be an easy relocation to cheaper, flexible, and skilled labor in India. However, offshoring the department was a two-part process. The first being an assessment of the work and the creation of the work manual, the second consisting of the offshore employees actually doing the licensing work. In the second area of the process of offshoring is where the Company X employees found their frustration.

The second half of offshoring was the most personal to the workers of the department. This is where the employees of the offshoring company had to partner and sit with Company X workers in their cubical. Now long term agency temps, the in-house temps, and some full-time employees had to train the offshore people to take over their job. In essence, the people that were already there on a contingent basis had to actively put effort into giving away a job that they worked so hard to obtain. Would any employee be able to come into the office day after day knowing that the end result of his or her hard work would be the unemployment line? Needless to say, this was a very difficult situation for the people in the department. This assignment compounded upon the fact that the participants were already negotiating with the effects of being temporary labor, which left them increasingly frustrated and angry. Nevertheless, they still gravitated to the idea that their work was too specialized to extradite to India. This makes for a complicated contradiction, on one hand the participants feel anxious about losing their

job, and on the other they continue to work against their best interests by fulfilling the production requirement of training the people to take away their jobs. My only conclusion to this incongruity lies in the embodied neoliberal discourses that impose self-regulation.

The discourses that constitute the laborer into performing at a status quo production rate are also abetted by an increased workload, lack of space, and constant supervision. Beth remembers that the employees training the offshore contractors were in a constant state of disarray. They were not only required to train the consultants, they also had to sustain their existing job requirements. In a small 5x7ft cubical, the Company X workers had to train another person from the minute they got into the office until the end of the day. After the trainee left, they would then work overtime in order to finish their own licensing applications. Putting in twelve-hour days became a normal part of the office culture. When a person resides in an office where he/she is overworked, without personal space, and does not have a moment to their self, the last thing that person is able to do is contemplate the precarious situation they are in. Furthermore, if an employee's secure state is within the neoliberal work-ethic, then their body will continue to adhere to the normative self-expectations of production.

A part of performing at high levels of production is also a result of feeling intimidating by the offshoring employees. Beth makes a point to note the levels of education that the consultants acquired. Beth, Grace, and Arturo never completed a bachelor's degree and pride themselves on working their way up without one. However, they know the importance of a degree in corporate America and are concerned with a competitive advantage that they do not possess. The education that the offshore

employees have also refutes the argument that licensing work is too specialized to offshore. The flexibility of the workplace holds a privileged space in the context of neoliberalism. Jiron and Imilan (2015) argue that,

Within this, mobility of labor—referring to the ease with which labourers are able to move around and within an economy and between different economies—becomes crucial to sustain and mode of production, particularly in the context of service economies based on permanent innovation. (p. 121)

Therefore, the participants are justified in their fear of a highly educated and cheaper labor source when the consultants are potentially more qualified and if the work is flexible enough to move across borders and still uphold production expectations. Consequently, if the consultants did not successfully preform the labor as easily elastic, their supervisors physically disciplined their bodies to enforce these neoliberal norms. While culturally horrified by the act of hitting the arm of one of the employees, the self-discipline of the *homo oeconomicus* is just as harmful. Both tactics constrict the body and persuade the individual to adhere to labor norms. The cultural differences make a clear delineation between the two disciplines with one being acceptable and the other abnormal. The physicality of the disciplinary act creates another more overt material manifestation of neoliberal control. Consequently, the amalgamation of time constraints, space infringement, constant supervision, intimidation by a qualified labor pool, self-regulation, and experiencing physical population control all manifests into an all-encompassing space where normative power dominates Company X worker's positionality.

While Beth provides a brief synopsis the entire circumstance of the offshoring project within the licensing department, it does set up the framework for analysis that

differs from the analysis of the first phenomena of outsourcing in very distinct ways. Where a temporary laborer will work in order to prove themselves or ultimately earn a permanent position, the same workers lose their sense of agency and purpose when left with an absence of reward. Even when that reward was unobtainable before, there was still a possibility of incentive. Thus, once that is taken away, the loss of possibility is acute. The question that this chapter addresses is how does precarious labor perform their work when they lose their agency due to an attempt to transfer their jobs to cheaper labor sources in India. Do the participants change their approach to work within the themes of personal work ethic/self-worth, precarious feelings about work, and performances of production within this second stage of potential job loss?

Interview Themes

Expanding upon the conversation of outsourcing in this chapter will bring over the same state of insecurity where I left the participants in Chapter Three and move into an even more complex proliferation of labor exploitation in the form of offshoring. While this project expands the conversation of the state of neoliberal labor in the service industry specifically looking at expendable labor, this chapter takes on a unique perspective of offshoring through the experiences of white-collar labor who are already defined by precarity informed by their existing temporary status. Furthermore, this vulnerable population became even more insecure when they were asked to actively participate in eradicating their livelihoods. It is very unusual to find a population of long term outsourced workers required to assist a company in offshoring their already tenuous positions. My original question before I entered into the interview process wondered how effective would these employees be with the idea of working against their own interests?

I anticipated that my co-participants would not be willing contributors to their own displacement, and what I discovered in each of the interviews was a surprising contradiction to my hypothesis.

I applied the interview themes of personal work ethic/self-worth, precarious feelings about work, and performances of production as a way to interrogate the phenomena of offshoring and to see if the participants switched expectations of their positionality and approach to work from the stand-point of outsourcing to offshoring. In order to remain consistent with my analysis in Chapter Three, I decided to keep the same three themes for comparison. In addition, the themes continued to be salient within the interview data regarding the offshoring attempt. In this second half of the case study, the themes develop with the participants to reflect the effects of uncertainty, the winding down of the beer and wine project, and the appearance of the offshore venture. The first area of self-work/personal work ethic incorporates a subtler understanding of locating pride and identity in work, and a more overt display of anger and frustration with the inability to uphold the neoliberal reinforcement of rewarding effective production. The second theme of precarity is an elevated understanding of the long term effects of uncertainty and how they change laborers approach to work. Finally, performance articulates the material outcomes of the participants' inability to negotiate self-value and agency during the company's attempt to offshore the department.

Offshoring Overview

The focus of the participant interview data specifically captured the experiences and the consequences that offshoring had on the participant's lives. Up until this point in the case study, my former colleagues and I were all working towards the end goal of

proving our worth in order to find stability by being hired on in a full-time capacity. Around ten-months into the project for me, and one year for the in-house temps, the company made the decision to offshore with the company that was successful downsizing the accounting division of the department to India. Once all of the manufacturing labor and work easily moved to developing countries for record breaking profits, it was an inevitable conclusion for the service industry to follow. This trend began with work that did not require a specific location and could easily be systematically reproduced such as call centers, information technologies, and most recently accounting. Developing countries offer U.S. companies immense tax breaks that the federal and state government cannot compete. Combined with the proliferation of an education labor pool, offshoring is an attractive option for corporations to cut labor costs without reducing production quality.

Will, Grace, and Arturo all mentioned their understanding of the reasons why Company X would pursue an avenue for greater profits by decreasing labor costs, but their logical acknowledgement did not translate to their emotional response of becoming collateral damage of this decision. As mentioned earlier, this situation is made more complex by the already understood temporary circumstance of their position. In this example, the company is exploiting the fear of an uncertain future but requiring that the temporary labor train the offshore consultants to take their job without any options to say no. Up until the point where the consultants came into the office, each of the participants were working hard with the expectations of the reward of full-time employment. This action of bringing in the consultants from the offshore company created disenfranchised and discouraged employees. Furthermore, Company X was so intent on downsizing the

licensing department to the extent of trying to offshore not once, but a second time when the first time failed to produce the results that the executives wanted. In other words, the workers who explained multiple times to the executives that their work was too specialized to move was proven correct with the failure of the first attempt. Although, their voice was again ignored with the proceeding of the second attempt. The company's position was clear, they will make this happen and the bottom line means more to them than the licensing employees.

Offshoring Interview Data

In this section of the chapter, I begin to analyze the interview data based on the narratives of offshoring in order to apply the concepts of embodiment and performance to analyze the discourses regarding feelings of worth and performances of work. The following conversations are an excerpt taken from the larger interview data collection. The narratives bellow give every day lived experience and first-hand knowledge to understanding how employees of a Fortune 500 company negotiate the main themes that emerged from the interview data, self-worth, precarity, and work performance. I asked the participants, Grace, Arturo, and Will to recount their experiences as a temporary employee working through an attempt to offshore the department to India. One of my main goals of this analysis is to approach neoliberalism from a performative bottom up perspective.

Self-Worth. This theme was the leading guide into the interpretation of the interview data in Chapter Four. However, self-worth has shifted its meaning into one of justification. Where in the last chapter working hard and being proud of the performance and production of the work lead to higher levels of self-worth, this shift in meaning

situates itself in how their work was rewarded. In other words, the decision to offshore meant that the work was met with disregard. This degree of rejection left the participants with a crisis of truth. Their truth was simple, work hard, prove yourself to the department heads, and be rewarded with secure employment. In addition, self-worth was defined by finding identity and meaning informed by successful production. These two pillars of defining what it means to be a good worker/citizen were put into question when the outcomes did not match the rationality of labor norms. Therefore, this theme has undergone a shift from reaffirming the sense of self to one where the participants question the meaning of work and the company's inefficacy to notice their value.

In the following narrative, Grace describes her confusion with the contradiction of her attitudes towards work and the negative response that she received from the company. One can clearly interpret her struggle between what she feels is her responsibility and her work precedent vs. the actual disposability of her position.

Grace: Without a college a degree without real secure underneath me it's always been a challenge just to prove to people that I'm smart, that I can do that job. Um, and having the offshoring thrown at me was kinda like now I have to prove myself again? Part of it was very anger related, where you're like is seriously happening? I only questioned this because the work we were doing was not black and white. The work we were doing is not something that you learn in a day or a week, and I guess the work we were doing had no concrete pattern. It was not an accounting function. It wasn't like you add and subtract and you have it over here or over there. It was always, always, well you first have to see what you get, and after

you've looked at it and worked on it it could go in any direction. Nothing was ever, standard. There was not policy manual or procedure manual because you couldn't make one. There was never any absolutes, and so for us to look at it and think we have been working at it for weeks and months and still learning as we went. And, uh, they for whatever reason thought we will just bring in all of these foreigners and they will do it.

LR: Ok, so what you're saying is that the work that you were doing is too specialized and nuanced for them to just say, hey here, we can make it uniform?

Grace: Exactly because we understood the accounting even though we felt bad about it. Most people understand how accounting is done, and it is very black and white. You don't *maybe* have some money over here, you either do or you don't. Um, this work we were doing wasn't cookie cutter. There was no way of saying this application will always be this way, there was no way of knowing that. Even with people who were trained in licensing could not predict the application process.

Within the beginning of the narrative, Grace already feels as though she is in a subordinate position due to her lack of higher education and must make up for that through her work performance. Thus, Grace is already coming into the workplace with the notion that she is required to prove her worth by working harder than someone with a degree to show that she belongs. She believes that there is a preconceived expectation that she will not understand the work because she does not have the educational training. This is already a driving force informing her approach to work. This belief along with the

discourses of working hard to be a productive member of society shapes Grace into an attractive employee for any company to employ. She might not realize her appeal which also allows for a space of exploitation. Grace follows the materialization of the embodied discourses of labor exactly how they were intended. Therefore, she becomes very defensive of her performance when it is threatened.

Justifiably, Grace expresses her anger of meeting all of the production expectations and having it not be good enough for the company. It is a challenging and emotional reaction when Grace feels as though she has worked hard to become an expert in her area and has successfully met all of the requirements of the job only to be faced with losing the job despite her efforts. This is where the theme of self-worth begins the move from positive reinforcement to a space of negative emotions wrapped in the reason of established work performance. The participants find their worth within the understanding that they performed at a high degree of excellence since the beginning of the beer and wine project. They learned and mastered the licensing process with dedication and proficiency. In other words, they know their self-worth has been established through time, ability, and success. Although the sense of self-worth has sustained the move into the offshoring situation, the participants no longer use this area to establish their value. They have built their worth through their production and are now using that knowledge to question the company's decision to enact their ability to dispose of them.

The change in the theme's meaning of self-worth shows the development of the participants views of work. During the outsourcing, the participants felt a need to provide evidence of their worth to the company and themselves. They found pride and strength by

performing at meaningful capabilities that satisfied the neoliberal norms conducting their actions. At this point, the participants felt secure in their understanding that they have not only proven their worth, they are exceptional at producing positive licensing outcomes. The concept of self-worth no longer needs to find itself within the performances of work, it is an established actuality. This theme is more concerned with how the participants use their confidence to find agency in a situation that they have to actively participate in against their own benefit. They have to continue applying their work-ethic to training people that are there to take their jobs. If they are successful, which they need to be to satisfy their self-worth, then they will lose their jobs. Let's summarize this situation in the context of the theme. The employees of the licensing department established their worth by performing and producing at a rate that assuaged their expectation as an exemplary worker and proven their competency to the supervisors of the project. However, the company did not take their efforts into account and decided to offshore. The participants self-assured in their worth then used that understanding to voice that they are essential to the success of this department.

Self-worth is now defined by the use of labor value in the internal and external struggle of the employees during offshoring. For example, Grace focuses in on the difficulty of the actual work. She argues that licensing work is specialized and inconsistent. It took the people working on the project several months to become comfortable with the unpredictability of the process. It also does not fall into the same principles of accounting which was successfully offshored. Furthermore, Grace felt animosity to not only the company but the Indian consultants they brought in to systematize the work Grace found realization. In the next set of interview data, Grace

continues her conversation on her work-ethic and how she continued to perform even knowing that it was against her self-interest.

LR: So, did you feel that your job might be in jeopardy when the offshoring was happening?

Grace: Um, yeah it was again a violation of almost you had tried to accomplish while being there. Um, I had always take the job and the work very seriously. I was doing everything that they had asked me to do. Um, obviously there were parts of it that I had no understanding of, because again, it was all new to me. Um, so I worked very hard in order to learn what it was I needed to do, how to adjust to get it done. That to me felt like they were putting all of that in the garbage can like well it doesn't matter. I think it was all that price tag, of this will be done cheaper. And really that was all they could see, at least that's how I saw it. Well that's great that you can bring in all of these people and pay them less, and still get the job done, but hello I don't think you'll get the job done. And then they kinda thought or at least I thought, ok so now, you're going to get rid of all these people that you taught, and you're going to bring in a new group of people who are not going to know anything about this and it's going to continue? Because I really could not see how everything that we had done just continuing and flowing onward because it wasn't at that point. It wasn't like we set it all up, and it's going to run like a machine because it wasn't going to.

LR: Mhmm, and what was that message during the offshoring. Did they have some sort of message of how you should be working?

Grace: Not really, I mean I got the impression that this a decision that we have made and we are sticking to it no matter what. And we don't care if people are mad, and we don't care if people lose their job, and we don't care if people want to leave and go find another job.

LR: Ok.

Grace: That was my personal thought process on it, where management was concerned. The upper management of the whole company took over management of our area and just kept shoving it down their throats that this is going to work. And when our management that was at our level said we're not so sure that this is going to work, we have a lot of problems, we have a lot of issues. It wasn't like, oh well let's hear what those are, and how we are going to get through them, or get around them. It was well make this work. It was a very authoritative this will work, and you will make it work.

Grace: Um, and now you'll never have me engaged with the company unfortunately because you went about it the wrong way. And again that's me personally. And, I guess if I had a lot more invested I might change my tune, but it's only been four years. I guess now I'm at the point where I feel like if I can work there until I want to retire great because the money isn't wonderful but it's not as good as it could be.

This narrative could have easily fit into the precarity section however I categorized it for this theme because it underlines the work that Grace has done to prove her worth and her argument underlining her value based within her performance. Again, we are seeing a shift from a need to live up to self and departmental expectations of work and the turn to justify remaining in their position because their exemplary track record. Self-worth is embedded in the feeling of accomplishment. The participants know that they have proven themselves and feel a strong sense of right in their fight against the movement to offshore. For example, Grace again expresses her feelings of anger towards the company because she completed all of the assignments that were assigned as responsibilities. Moreover, she completed them successfully and in an accelerated timeframe. She learned the job, worked hard, and relied on her performance to uphold her values of work informed by neoliberal norms. Grace felt she was owed the respect and security of a full-time position from the company. Instead, she was faced with losing her job because they wanted to pursue a cheaper labor source. As she mentions, she perceived the company effectively throwing her hard earned work into the garbage because of their only loyalty, the bottom line.

Grace continues on with explanation of her position at the beginning of offshoring. She determines that the attempt to offshore will be a failure due to the time and understanding the licensing employees have already established with their production outcomes. In addition, it would be a waste of time and money that the company had already invested training all of the temporary project labors. Also, the production line would stop when transferring the work to India, and each of the licenses is on a strict deadline for renewal. Grace could not comprehend why the company would put a strain

on the workflow and move labor sources for a greater profit when it meant that efficiently and investment into the existing labor would be lost. I believe that the worst aspect of the offshoring for her was the idea that the company could not care less about their employees. They were in a tunnel vision to offshore and were not willing to take into account the process of work or the people who were invested in the production. Essentially, self-worth informed by the quality of work was not a consideration of the management. They did not care if their employees created a better product because their personal identity was reflected in the outcome. The consequence of the constant pressure to offshore left Grace and the other participants partially engaged with the work where they were once fully present.

The first set of interview data defines self-worth as a state that has been achieved by the participants but was questioned through the actions of the offshore mandate. Grace was proud of her accomplishments in the licensing department. She proved her self-worth to herself and her superiors through the dedication she performed in her work. However, she was faced the fact that management did not recognize or take into consideration the hard earned value that these employees generated. At the end of the narrative Grace begins to talk about the consequences of offshore on her self-worth. Her whole world of meaning no longer made sense and she asserted what she knew, working hard, as a way to resist her invisibility in the decision making process to offshore. Vallas and Cummins (2015) argue that it is important to look identity production as cycle of meaning making though both production and the dominance of discursive norms. The authors write,

Underlying these strands of thinking is an assumption, often inherited from classical Marxism, concerning the primacy of production in the forging of human subjectivity. As a consequence, scholars have often viewed employee identity as

an outcome of the work situation, with little attention to the independent role that identity norms might play in the reproduction of the employment relation itself. (p. 3)

Grace took back parts of herself from the labor process to preserve her emotional well-being. Even though she removed some of herself from the performance of labor, she still performed to the normative expectations of hard work. The meaning of work and her involvement made her shift perspective of rewards, but she remained consistent to the neoliberal norms of work that inform her identity.

In the next narrative, Arturo similarly accounts for the same feelings of frustration and anger but does not depend on his past establishment of self-worth. He instead acknowledges how he feels about offshoring and then contradicts his state of invisibility by returning to the comfort of working hard. He takes pride in not letting his frustration impact the quality of work. This narrative is a strong example of how powerful embodied neoliberal discourses continue to self-regulate our behavior even when it goes against our best interests. Both Grace and Arturo could have enacted a slowdown of production, put in the minimal amount of work, taken longer breaks, or wasted time on the Internet, they would not allow themselves this resistance because that is simply, “not who they are.” The work continued to reflect their work-ethic and value even when there was no longer a need to prove themselves due to continued evidence, or lack of opportunities.

LR: Right and I can't imagine how you were feeling during the offshoring. I imagine that the work represented those emotions?

Arturo: Oh, I don't know. You know, I think in your mind it does, but I think like for me, I always felt bad. You know, screw them and all this but I still did the job. Just couldn't help myself.

LR: So how did you react verbally or emotionally?

Arturo: Verbally and emotionally I was very verbal about how I felt and emotionally I felt very bad about it but I never let it affect my job performance.

LR: So why do you think you continued to do the work the way you did even though you were upset?

Arturo: Just our generation. I just think you know, that's how I grew up.

LR: Mhm.

Arturo: Do the best you can you know, even if you're leaving a company. As much as I hate the company I wouldn't be one to say "stick it up your ass". I would leave on a high note.

LR: Ok.

Arturo: You know, it's a big corporation that's trying to cut costs. You know when I left another Fortune 500 company I said "you know what, you could say a lot of things about this company but the bottom line is they put food on my table and a roof over my head for 21 years so I owe them for that. But that's just the way I was born.

LR: When you kept working, you kept plugging along even though you were angry, did you ever feel you know I'm going to do this therefore I will get rewarded in some sort of way?

Arturo: Not during offshoring, no.

LR: What about before offshoring?

Arturo: Oh yeah I mean I tried, you know, I was trying to make myself noticed. I was trying to do the best I could. I never felt sick. I was always the one “you need me to stay, whatever you want me to do” sure because you're trying to get hired on.

LR: But during offshoring you said it changed, why?

Arturo: Just because I felt helpless. I felt like doesn't matter what I'm gonna do, they're still gonna do this and screw us.

LR: You said you felt helpless, that nothing was going to happen from there as far as a full-time position, but you kept plugging away.

Arturo: Yeah.

Arturo: For me personally I'm proud of the fact that I survived. I you know, hung in there. I'm also proud of the fact that I'm doing it, I'm doing something that I had no skill whatsoever for, that I have developed some skills and that I've been able to compete with my fellow employees. You know, this is very far removed from anything I did so...

LR: So you feel accomplished.

Arturo: I feel accomplished.

At the beginning, Arturo strongly articulates his verbal opposition to the offshoring. He also recognizes that he feels unappreciated, but it never hindered his approach to work. The sense of pride of working against adversity is a neoliberal norm that is so embodied for Arturo that he understands this reaction as essentialism or the way he was born. As stated in the second chapter, none of us are born with these norms they were learned through discourse, embodied to create meaning, and performed through our

work. Miller and Rose (2008) articulate this ideology as natural by attributing it to the *homo oeconomicus* as follows, “The ‘enterprising’ activities of businesses, organizations and individuals, rather than planning and state intervention, would reconcile what was known of ‘human nature’ with the economic imperatives a production and the democratic imperatives of politics” (p. 195). Therefore, the neoliberal discourse informing Arturo’s perseverance was not inherently apart of him until it was learned and cultivated through governmentality. Self-worth became a part of this discursive process by bonding with work-ethic, and the gratification that Arturo portrayed by acting against his own self-interest is a material performance of the neoliberal discourse that regulates identity with work. This is a difficult bond to question or break when it is so deeply understood as a reflection of character. He felt strong enough in his conviction to work that it overrode any question to resist.

Arturo mentions on three different occasions that his approach to work is shaped by the understanding that he must put forth his best effort to matter the circumstance. It would mar him as an individual if he did not reflect a positive attitude towards the company and the work. He even justifies corporation’s move to cut labor to generate more profit. While on one hand he is upset about his condition and his exit from the last company where he was employed, on the other he shows gratitude to both places of work for allowing him to finance his living situation. How did labor become thankful for being exploited? Vallas and Cummins (2015) write that there is a crucial area of governmentality that allows neoliberal discourses to effectively produce self-regulation. They argue,

The first is that governmental power relies significantly on what Foucault calls “technologies of the self”— structural apparatuses and discursive practices that conjure particular forms of subjectivity, as specific historical periods require. A second theme has been Foucault's insistence that power has changed its apparent logic. Rather than operating negatively, through subtraction—that is, through threat of punishment or repression—power now exhibits a positive or affirmative guise: it rules by seeming to multiply the opportunities or choices that individual actors routinely enjoy. (p. 4)

There were many of us who were thankful to just have a job, that it allowed the company to take advantage of labor scarcity. However, in the bigger picture of neoliberal discourse, our structure of meaning is now predicated on the feelings of relief of employment. These discourses open up a space where resistance is controlled with the obstruction of status. In other words, I feel special to have this job where I can live within my means, and I am thankful to this company for allowing me an opportunity to work. If we turned around the discourse and recognized that it should be the company to be thankful to labor for generating profit and not the other way around the potential for resistance would be a powerful part of the labor economy. Instead, we are beholden to companies for giving us a paycheck and a place to become a good citizen. Arturo owes his employer for his existence. At best this material manifestation of neoliberal rhetoric is questionable, at its worst, labor takes their obligation to companies as normative.

The normative incorporation of indebtedness does not act on its own accord, it is bound to and informed by the constant need to affirm an individualized place within the organizational structure of labor through the production of self-worth via work-ethic. This chain of meaning becomes stronger and harder to infiltrate when precarity is introduced. The uncertainty of employment creates an increased affinity towards the

company acting almost like a savior to a subjugated population. Arturo rationalizes this phenomenon by the contradictory notion of being upset with losing or the possible loss of his job with the acknowledgement of being in debt to the company. When someone feels both disenfranchised but relieved at the same time, it is difficult to find agency. Thus, Arturo continues to work at high levels in order to find reassurance in his work, which negates the precarity of job loss. The drive to repeat and reaffirm the identity as a good worker/citizen has become a priority instigated by neoliberal norms to keep labor in a constant pattern of self-regulation and control.

This pattern continues within the next part of the narrative. Arturo in an impassioned interpretation explains that he felt helpless. Yet, he continued to work while feeling powerless. He says that his belief in meritocracy was challenged during the offshoring, but he never deviated from performing work. Miller and Rose (2008) write about neoliberal self-government,

The language of the entrepreneurial individual, endowed with freedom and autonomy, has come to predominate over almost any other evaluations of the ethical claims of political power and programmes of government. A sphere of freedom is to be (re)established, where autonomous agents make their decisions, pursue their preferences and seek to maximize the quality of their lives. (pp. 81-81)

Thus, the focus of needing value switched from seeking an external reward to an internal affirmation confirming his worth through work. Once again, instead of resisting, Arturo saw offshoring as a challenge to be won. This was a personal trial that was contingent upon his identity as a worker. Although, if we look at this battle another way, there was still a reward to win, and in this case it was self-worth. As Arturo clearly states, he feels accomplished. He is proud of his ability to be a good worker during a time where he felt

powerless. His self-worth was the reward that came out of a very difficult situation. The power of neoliberal discourse allows for labor to find their strength in work while also continuing to generate profit for the company. The embodied idea of work as a reflection of our identity perpetuates through resistance in the name of our own best interest.

Grace and Arturo reflected upon self-worth in two different ways. Grace sought out justification of her value based upon the history of her performance while Arturo found confirmation of his significance through the perseverance of work. Both used the record of outstanding work performances to understand their place within the offshore effort. At this point in time within the project, the participants believed that they proved their value to the company and themselves through their performances of production. They were shocked and confused by the company's insistence to eliminate their jobs despite the quality of production. Grace and Arturo were angry and disenfranchised with the result of the company's decision. They did not know how to make sense of the incongruity of following and incorporating the values of the *homo oeconomicus* with the messages stemming from the corporation that it was not good enough. Nevertheless, the pull from the embodied neoliberal discourse was strong enough to keep the laborers producing by providing a sense of self-worth through work. Consequently, is the neoliberal condition of self-regulation powerful enough to sustain its control when precarity becomes too overwhelming for the worker to find meaning in work?

Precarity. The precarious workplace at Company X extended its governance into offshoring by making an already insecure job situation more unstable. In Chapter Three, the participants felt the need to prove their worth through work to find a sense of control. By working to find agency the company is able to reap the benefits of high levels of

production, whereas the laborers are unable to find real security. Ettlenger (2007) reflects on this condition as follows, “People grope for certainty. Reflexive denial of precarious life poses problems as people misrepresent complex realities and act on those misrepresentations, in turn re-creating precarity” (p. 320). By trying to find security in work the exact opposite occurred in this situation. The employees were either working themselves out of a job by completing the project or working to help people learn their labor practices in order to do their jobs in India. In each instance, they were helping perpetuate the precarious workplace by making it easier for the company to eliminate positions. Ettlenger continues this line of thought by writing,

“The everydayness of precarity hold clues to how people routinely, if implicitly, develop strategies that permit feelings of certainty amid uncertainty. People grope for the surety to navigate social, political, economic, and cultural live through everyday discursive and material practices” (2007, pp. 325-326).

I would agree with that thought within the first section of this case study. It proved true when the participants held onto the idea of meritocracy of working hard to be rewarded; however, the amount of time combined with the added level of precarity of offshoring deviates a bit from this path. This theme poses an interesting problematic, one where the baseline of work performance remains stable, but personal investment begins to disintegrate.

Beginning with Grace’s narrative, there is a clear shift from a sense of hope emanating from the possibility of working hard to the loss of that reward. At this point in the case study, the participants have endured at least eight months of precarity as outsourced employees. They maintained their high levels of production values by incorporating the neoliberal norm of getting rewarded through work. This was a

motivating factor and a coping mechanism for the participant's survival. The fear of job loss became the constant reminder of the fragility of their position as temporary employees but pushed to the background as a lingering presence in the cubical. Once offshoring became a reality the ghost of precarity manifested to the corporal form of a threat. While neoliberalism thrives off of precarity as a way to control labor populations is there a point where labor breaks under the pressure of fear?

In the next two narratives, the theme of precarity is investigated through the understanding that the workplace is now experiencing the aggregation of insecurity creating an even more unstable employment situation where labor can no longer find optimism since the promise of a reward has now been eliminated. As suggested below, Grace and Will contend with the paradox of following neoliberal norms of work or resisting. Grace's narrative opens with the question regarding her ability to work through the threat of offshoring now that it is a real possibility that she will lose her job. Her experience guides us through the extent of power that neoliberal norms execute through the body of the white-collar worker. Furthermore, we can recognize the toll that precarity has on labor after a sustained period of time.

LR: So what do you do outside of working to negotiate this situation to make it more understandable for you?

Grace: I guess I put less investment in my job there, um I would have in the beginning called it my next career. You know at this age, I've had lengthy employment at a lot of different companies. I thought those were my careers, but they didn't work, so I really thought this was going to be it. And now that I'm here, I guess I don't feel that it's one hundred percent

certain that this is my career because they have kinda tinged that whole view.

LR: So you never feel one hundred percent about the company?

Grace: No, I feel it's a job. Like I said four years ago said this is my next career and I'll stay here until whenever. There are a lot of people who work there that have worked there for twenty, thirty, forty years. Um, so in the beginning you're thinking that could be me. Um and now I think, no it's not a career, it's a job. I go in every day I do my best and I get paid for it. I don't get paid to deal with as much stress that I do, so I leave it there. Um, in fact today its Saturday I left a huge issue on Friday that was a huge deal and I had done everything I could. And normally I probably would have gone home and fretted it all weekend over oh I didn't do this, oh I could have done this better. The anxiety of going in on Monday thinking something is going to blow up because of something that I didn't do, is no longer there. I did the best that I could on Friday, and I've forgotten about it all weekend. And when I go in on Monday I will view it completely differently and won't take it as personally. Whereas I should have done more because when I left Friday I was already like, I've done as much as I can do, and I think that has changed unfortunately that has changed my work ethic because normally I wouldn't have taken it that lightly.

LR: So what were what are some of the things that could happen could make you more invested in the company?

Grace: Probably taking away that threat, because they already offshored all of accounting and that was done before. Um, they went back and forth with us several times. And now, like I mentioned, the department next to us is being let go at the end of the month. I'm not sure that ties into that, I think it ties in a little bit where maybe they felt like they could get more done without those people. I'm not really sure what the thought process is behind that. Um, for the amount of work we do, and the level of work we do I think we should get paid more. Our pay increases every year are one to two percent. Uh, it doesn't really do much for you. Uh, I think the people are salaried are even more upset because they got that salary taken away from them, and now they are just hourly. And yeah their pay didn't change, but the overall benefit does change. And they have to clock in and they have to clock out. And, I think it makes a difference.

LR: Mhmm.

Grace: So, um I don't know. I think I'm at the point now that I'm sorry to say that even if there was an opportunity for a promotion or something, which there isn't in our department, I don't know if I'd take it. Where I think a few years ago I would have jumped at it. So, I think overall it has ruined my feelings, thought process, whatever you want to call it. Which, for me personally, is sad because I never went into a job like that. I've always been very optimistic. I've always been very, hey if I work hard they will pay me and if I do this I will get promoted. You know there is always that give and take, you do what you have to prove to be promoted, and yes you

have to work hard to get a good increase. But now, there is no chance of promotion in my department, and I don't see the increases going beyond that one to two percent.

LR: Has your understanding of the idea you work hard you get rewarded changed?

Grace: It has, it has. And it's sad because it'd be different if it was something that no one can control. The economy, I was let go from a position a few years ago because of the economy. That to me has never re-entered my mind because like hey a lot of people have lost their jobs. Big companies have to stay in business. Now with this because they chased that idea, and because they were so stubborn even when they were proved wrong. And when they were proved again and again and again it wasn't going to work, they just held to it.

An overwhelming sense of defeat surrounds Grace's words and body as she recounts her experience long after offshoring failed for the second time. In the first question, Grace takes a surprising turn from her prior answers regarding her involvement in the work. In her previous statements she was resolute in finding and expressing her identity in the performance of work, in this case, she consciously removes her dedication from the production. Berlant (2012) describes this area of labor precarity as:

an ongoing (structurally) economic problem — first, indicating that capitalism thrives on instability; and second, pointing to the ways that capitalist forms of labor make bodies and minds precarious, holding out the promise of flourishing while wearing out the corpus we drag around in different ways and at different rates, partly by overstimulation, partly by understimulation, and partly by the incoherence with which alienation is lived as exhaustion plus saturating intensity. (Puar, Berlant, Butler, Cvjic, Lorey, & Vujanovic, 2012, p. 166)

In this case, Berlant portrays the lived experiences of the participants precisely. Grace has gone through the precarity of being a temporary worker where Company X benefited from her work by exploiting the discourse of meritocracy to create the possibility of full-time employment where employees worked towards the end goal of stability. Then they dashed the hope of the department temps by pressing the process of offshoring where they trained the people that would take any potential they earned for a full-time position. Finally, at this juncture in Grace's interview, I can conclude that her body reached the precipice of exhaustion as a consequence of, overstimulation, understimulation, alienation, and the overwhelming intensity of precarity that she had to live with for over a year. It is no surprise that Grace could no longer give herself fully to the work, because she already gave everything she had without any recourse.

Conversely, she still has an emotional attachment to the *homo oeconomicus* and the neoliberal norms that require labor's whole existence as a prerequisite for citizenship.

After Grace shared her interpretation of how she currently approaches work after the offshoring failed, I wanted to know if there was a way for her to become reengaged with the company. Her answer remains consistent with the effects of the insecurity of precarity. Grace wants security. She has lost trust with Company X after not one but two attempts to offshore the department and ignored the voices of the department's employees. In addition to the failed attempt of the licensing department, Company X is still perusing offshoring in other departments. This act is a constant reminder of what employees had to endure, and the possibility of another attempt to downsize the

department. While the *homo oeconomicus* puts a lot of trust in the conduct of conduct, the constant presence of offshoring constructs an effective organizational jurisdiction.

When Grace mentions the need for more pay, I believe that it has less to do with being compensated and more about recognition. Following the previous comments about overtime compensation, I determined that the employees would have felt more engaged with the department if they were recognized for the quality of their work. Instead they have been ignored or used as a means to an end. Throughout the offshoring experience, the employees felt invisible and unappreciated. While Grace would like to see the eradication of uncertainty in the workplace, compensation would help with reengagement as an indicator of appreciation even though the company converted all of the full-time employees to an hourly mediated system. It was not enough for the company to control the level of production through fear of job loss, now they are subjugating their workers to a system that regulates to the very second of productivity. At this point, I am not sure how Company X could strip anymore possibilities of autonomy away from their labor force. It astonishes me that employees like Grace are still apart of the department and are able to walk into their cubical on a daily basis. The act of raising the pay might help the wound of offshoring to close a bit, however I think the infection has already spread.

The contamination of offshoring on production is realized through the act of personal detachment from the work. Grace has seemingly lost her ambition and drive to prosper and ascend in the company as determined by her production value. She no longer wants to put more effort into the company or personal investment in her work. Grace has removed herself from the personal or emotional attachment that is a vital aspect of neoliberal norms. This act of personal protection could lead to a breakdown of

production, but it does not. When she disengages, it brings up feelings of guilt and disappointment. These negative reactions to separating identity from labor do not necessarily inhibit the production value. I will go more into this phenomenon in the next theme of performance, but I wanted to draw attention to consequences of long term precarity on the body of the worker. Grace has now experienced a work situation where the result of the norm she has embodied did not equal the sum of certainty that she has learned to expect. Therefore, her trust in the ideology of meritocracy is broken. The effect of losing meaning in a norm that has become so embedded in the U.S. American culture has devastating consequences for my participants. Even though they still remain with the company and have full-time employment, they have lost their optimism and motivation for the work.

Continuing this strain of thought, Will's narrative explains his experience with the precarity of offshoring through his desire to acquire full-time employment. He speaks more directly to the work he was performing that helped advance the precarity of offshoring and the incongruity that confused the integrity of his work-ethic. Analogously to Grace's narrative, Will feels defeated from the consequence of the offshoring attempt. Yet, unlike Grace, Will's experience is entirely lived through the lens of impermanence. The fact that his status is informed by being an agency temp leads Will to believe that he was never a part of the organization or work in the first place, and therefore the protection of his identity was never a factor. He still relies on the work to find and inform his worth. Instead of removing himself from the work Will directs his anger externally.

LR: So how did you feel about your status with the company during offshoring?

Will: I felt like it was too much work for a temp.

LR: Ok, so with the too much work did you enjoy the work you were doing, or was it just overwhelming?

Will: It wasn't overwhelming. I never had a problem working overtime. I've never been afraid of hard work. The workload was a lot, but it was manageable.

LR: Ok.

Will: It was the fact that the stuff I was doing. That I was training people to take these jobs that I didn't even have because I was temp. It just seemed weird to me that they were having temps do that. Does that make sense?

LR: Yes, so a little bit more why was it weird that a temporary employee was training an offshore consultant?

Will: I never really felt like I was a part of the team. I was a temporary employee through the agency. And I was doing the work, and I knew I was good at it because I was still there. Uh, so I don't think I was a good candidate to do the training. Since I wasn't a Company X employee why would they outsource the training for offshoring?

LR: Mhmm.

Will: It just seemed like two steps in the wrong direction.

LR: Did it make you feel more a part of the department by doing that work?

Will: I always felt like I wasn't really apart of the company, so no.

LR: Ok, can you talk a little bit more about that? Why didn't you feel like you were a part of the company?

Will: Because I was a temporary employee that, if I was ever going to get hired it would take a lot longer than I would have assumed.

LR: Mhmm.

Will: I had, I went into this the attitude that I can go in there, I can work hard, and it will get paid off in the end getting a full time position. And they made it sound like that, but it happened way too late.

LR: Now by you're telling me this is the person you are. You work hard, so did you expect then by working hard that you would get rewarded in getting a full time position?

Will: I always expected that.

LR: Ok, so tell me a little bit more about that, how did you go about getting your full time position? Because you got hired on correct?

Will: I did after three years, after three years I got hired on. Um, basically I just when they started interviewing everybody when I knew four people were going to leave. I just thought out in my head, who would be a good fit here. And who's doing the hiring, and basically just on my A game trying to do everything I can to be noticed. That I'm a good employee, that I would be a good candidate for this position. And, even though I had worked there for three years I felt like I needed to impress people.

LR: Ok.

Will: I started wearing ties (laughter)

LR: So, I'm hearing a little bit of inconsistency Because you're saying you work hard you get rewarded, but you're also stressing the three years you worked there before you got your position.

Will: Yeah.

LR: So, tell me a little bit about these three years and the benefits of working hard?

Will: I never expected it to take three years to get hired there. I thought I mean it was just the situation I was in; I thought it was the wrong time for me to get in with that company. I felt like it was a different time I could've been a temp for three months maybe six months, who knows? I'm sure every company is different. Then get a full time position. But three years of doing more than my fair share of work, it seemed at that point I got hired on I didn't want to be there.

In the opening response, Will first states that offshoring created too much work for the department to handle, and in the next breath he assured me that he was not afraid of hard work. In a clear nod to the *homo oeconomicus*, Will regulated his initial response to reflect his work-ethic. He then clarified that it was the actual work itself that was the problem. In other words, Will validates his dedication to neoliberal norms but questions the work that he was required to conduct. In this regard, the work included training a person to effectively take away his job. As an outsourced employee training an offshore contractor, it leaves this situation open to analysis that has the potential to be unprecedented. It is more common to see research conducted on either outsourcing or offshoring; this study allows an in-depth of both phenomena's occurring at the same time.

In this complicated series of events, neoliberal norms hold a state of control imperative to holding the employees accountable to their work. Both Will and Grace express anger and frustration towards offshoring, they negotiate the precarity in two different ways, but they always stay faithful to internal and external discourses of production.

As confusion and the loss of agency created an antagonistic workplace, Will remained confident in his self-worth substantiated by his long-term employment and quality of work. Although, his self-reliance did not stretch into the space of certainty. This was exacerbated by the fact that Will did not feel a part of the Company X culture while simultaneously perpetuating his Othered status by training the offshore consultant. His confusion as a temporary employee training an offshoring consultant to take away his tentative livelihood is warranted. On the other hand, it makes sense for the company to have one flexible labor source train another due to the ephemeral nature of both conditions. They are able to produce at a larger profit when two sources of cheap labor are working together. While Will did not understand why he would be the one training due to his lack of status with the company, he is unable to see his vulnerability as a temporary employee that can be let go for no reason. Therefore, if the offshoring attempt succeeded then it would be much less of a loss for the company in terms of providing a layoff package or unemployment benefits for temps.

In Will's perspective, the assignment to train the consultant was two steps backwards in obtaining a full-time position, but it was a step forward for offshoring. Expendable labor training flexible labor fulfills neoliberalism's ideology perfectly. Using precarity to govern insecure labor pools allows the market to take full advantage of production at a lower cost. While it seems like a questionable move for the company to

depend on outsourced workers to effectively transition the work to the offshore consultants, the neoliberal norms that are in constant control over labor's approach to work, pull the temps back in the production line. The power of discursive norms is proven through the material performances of work. The precarity of outsourcing and offshoring affected the personal feelings about work, but did not diminish the act of work. I will go further into this analysis in the next theme of performance, but it is important to note that precarity did not reduce production output, only meaning.

The neoliberal discourse of meritocracy that was so pervasive in controlling the participant's motivation to prove themselves becomes a distant, but still present memory within offshoring. Will explains that in the beginning up until the offshoring attempt he put full faith in the idea that if he worked hard, he would be rewarded with full-time employment. But the time it took for him to even be considered made him challenge the embodied discourse. The further they moved away from awarding Will with a position, the more he questioned his belief in meritocracy. However, he never took his challenge of meritocracy to the point of disbelieving, instead he blamed his timing, the company, and wardrobe for the absence of the reward. The discourse of meritocracy is so embodied into Will that it never occurred to him to find fallacy in the norm. Instead he continued to work hard, trained people to take away his job, and wore ties to impress his supervisors. His reasoning concluded that it was just bad luck, or wrong timing, but never in the technologies that create a system where meaning is truth and action is based upon individual circumstance. Once again, he took fault in the failure of success and was frustrated with the company, but never lost his devotion to meritocracy.

Grace and Will lost meaning associated with work. Labor looks to production to create understandings of identity, citizenship, and worth, but what happens when we lose the path to self? Grace turns to protecting herself by not allowing her worth to be determined by the company. Will keeps working at high levels of production because that is where he finds security. Both are changed in very negative ways from living with the stress of precarity for an extended period of time. While they both lose faith and loyalty in the company, they still work for that slight promise of reward. Kaplan (2014) writes:

With this last, we are clearly in the ambit of a reflexive system whose target object is nothing other than its own operations. But the same holds for the economy, which becomes 'neoliberal' in becoming self-referential, concerned not with access to resources, rates of profit, and so forth, but with its own conditions of possibility. (p.137)

Kaplan is referring to the market economy in his analysis of neoliberalism, but the same condition rings true for the labor. In this case, the participants are concerned with the possibility of secure full-time employment. Therefore, I have to question whether the emotional constraint of precarity has any bearing on production or is the appeal of meritocracy strong enough to sustain a battered labor force?

Performances of work. The *homo oeconomicus* drives this last theme of performance. The participants, as shown in the last section, lost faith in the company and performed their disappointment in work. However, if they drifted in disappointment or resistance they still returned to the normative expectations of doing work. This action reinforces how Kaplan (2014) defines neoliberalism as performative and self-regulated market economy (p. 139). Technologies of governmentality will always reflexively control the market, but the market does not necessarily need to regulate labor production values in the service sector, they have proven to be quite competent in regulating

themselves to uphold market norms. Developing this conclusion from the interview data, the participants, no matter the circumstance, continue to perform and produce services. In the theme of performance, Will comes to the same conclusion as Grace that he needs to preserve parts of himself as a way to survive the workplace, and his performance suffers as a result. Although, Will's work performance diminishes, he still returns to the stability of his personal work-ethic. Arturo similarly loses his drive in work after the stress of precarity becomes debilitating. In both narratives, Will and Arturo express their disappointment in the company and in their loss in work-ethic. Furthermore, this last theme explores how the neoliberal discourses that labor has embodied as an essential part of their identity begins to be challenged by the participants need to survive in the precarious workplace.

In this point in the case study, the offshore attempt failed in both attempts to move the department to India. Because the plan to offshore was unsuccessful for Company X, they decided to move forward with the primary agenda of cutting labor costs by downsizing the licensing department. The participants in this study have now endured the event of being temporary labor subjected to not one but two attempts to eradicate their already precarious employment position. I believe that it was the last stage of downsizing that finally released the defeating blow to Will and Arturo. At the beginning of the move to scale down the department, the executives decided that all the employees of the licensing department must interview for a permanent position except for the agency temps. Will was justifiably upset about being dismissed for consideration. He believed that despite not being a part of the company that he was on the same performance level or above as everyone else in the department. If Will's work

performance was not impacted by being a temporary employee or offshoring it was because his faith in the neoliberal discourse of meritocracy. However, once the department took him out of consideration for full-time employment his understanding of the ideology of working hard to get rewarded shattered.

LR: So you talked about feeling like an afterthought, why?

Will: At that point, I think I cared less about the work.

LR: Ok, can you talk a little bit more about that?

Will: Cause I had been there for, I don't know, a year or so. It seemed like the department couldn't get any smaller, and it seemed like they didn't care about any of the temps. So I felt like I could do the minimum and nobody would notice or care. And, I actually did that, and I feel bad about that because I'm not that kinda person. But, there was a few days that I just didn't do anything, and nobody noticed or cared.

LR: So when you say nobody cared, nobody noticed, what does that mean?

Will: The management didn't say anything. I would assume that somebody would have said something if all I did was nothing all day... (laughter)

LR: So before then you felt pretty proud of the work you were doing?

Will: Oh yeah, I always did my best. You know for most of the time I was there I would put in one hundred percent. But there were just some days I felt like, why even come in?

LR: Ok.

Will: And, right after they didn't give us the interviews I really felt like that. I felt like they don't care about us, why should I care about them?

LR: So when did you first have that thought in your mind? Why should I come in?

Will: Right after they, uh, sent the offshore people away and didn't interview anybody.

LR: Ok, so now, did you feel like your work was pretty one hundred percent during the offshoring?

Will: Even more because I was working overtime because this, this woman had to sit with me eight hours a day and I had to prepare for that.

LR: So it was an increased workload during the offshoring.

Will: Yes, so I was working overtime to get my stuff done. And I had to get these tests for her, and I couldn't do them when she was sitting next to me.

LR: So are you still at that point of not caring as much?

Will: Oh no, that? I got rid of that because I knew that I wasn't going to stick around too long if I didn't care. It was shortly after they interviewed the full time people that I didn't care. Then I realized what's the point of me not doing my work? It's dishonest to go to a place everyday and not do anything and get paid for it.

LR: So, so did you go back to them the full hundred percent?

Will: Yeah, I mean why not. If I'm doing something everyday I might as well do it right.

LR: Ok, so how long did you say your work wasn't at one hundred percent.

Will: A couple months, tops. I mean I did work in that time. But, if I didn't do anything for two months it would be weird.

- LR: Did something happen for you to go to the one hundred percent.
- Will: No nothing happened, that's just the way I've always been.
- LR: Ok.
- Will: So, I tried something different and then I thought this is really not me, this is not the person that I want to be, I'm just going to go in there and work hard.
- LR: Now by you're telling me this is the person you are. You work hard, so did you expect then by working hard that you would get rewarded in getting a full time position?
- Will: Yes, I always expected that.

In the last interview section, Will explains that he never felt like he was a part of the company, but he still maintained his performance despite his feelings toward the company. This behavior was most likely due to the dedication to performing the expectations of the *homo oeconomicus* and certainty in meritocracy. Will was still in the space where he was proving his worth to the company while his performances of work reinforced his concept of identity. Will worked very hard to feel secure in his performance. Therefore, when he was denied the reward for his work and could not fight back in an official capacity the removal of emotional engagement and the slowdown commenced.

As Will tried to find agency in his detachment, he also found dissidence. Surprised by the lack of care and acknowledgement from the department, he performed what he determined as the minimal amount of work. It is unexpected that the management did not determine the decrease in production that Will is claiming. This can

mean that Will continued performing well enough to sustain production expectations. He probably still performed at a quality level, but because of the removal of emotional engagement, Will could not find meaning in the performance and therefore determined that his production was devalued. Although if in fact his work did suffer, he was still performing at a level that was acceptable to the management.

If Will was not performing well, he would have made a downsizing decision easy for management. Therefore, the indication that he felt bad about his performance actually controlled his attempt at resistance.

Even with the episodes of non-performance and detachment, Will sustained a level of production that kept him in the organizational culture. When he determined that he needed to protect his identity, the views on his personal performance became skewed. The absence of embodied engagement in the performance of work provides a body and mind disconnect. This divide should afford a space of resistance against neoliberal norms once the meanings become disembodied. Then again in this instance all of the participants continue to produce but remove their identity from the process and resistance loses its potential. There is no clearer understanding of the power of neoliberal discursive norms than when the material convergence of body and production combine and perform even when the emotional tie loosens in favor of the normative chain. Even when Will can no longer find affirmation and acceptance of citizenship through his work, he still performs through normative control.

The section regarding the work during offshoring shows that Will continued to perform at a high level of production even though he was training that person to do his job. It was only after the offshoring attempt did Will perform a slowdown in his work.

Even during the offshore Will adamantly states that he was working to the best of his abilities because he did not have a choice. In addition to the lack of options, Will states that it would have been dishonest to continue his lack of performance. That guilt along with the feeling that you are deviating from the person that you truly are is a very powerful controlling factor in keeping labor in their place. The statement of “this is who I am” reinforces the idea that neoliberal norms have become a part of everyday ideology to an extent that it is naturalized as identity. When labor shifts perspective towards work, it also creates a change in what they believe of their essential selves. When one does not want to desolate a fundamental aspect of who they are as a person, then it is safer to return to the center of normative meaning. Will scarcely scratched the surface of resistance only to return to a place of security. In this space, Will remained loyal to the promise of meritocracy even when he was overlooked for full-time employment. He might have lost his personal engagement in the work for a small amount of time, but he continued to produce enough labor to satisfy the management. Furthermore, the responsibility to the embodied norms brought him firmly back in control of the *homo oeconomicus*.

In the last set of interview data, Arturo follows the same path as Will when it comes to resisting through disengagement. In a dramatic change from Chapter Three, Arturo seemingly loses his faith in the neoliberal labor norms when the offshoring took place. Even though he was a temporary hire through Company X, Arturo felt increasingly more insecure with the onslaught of the offshoring consultants. As a consequence, Arturo fought a battle between his emotional attachment to neoliberal norms and his feeling of disposability. In a parallel act to Grace and Will, Arturo consciously removes himself

from emotionally engaging in the work. And interestingly enough, he continues producing even at lower levels when feeling resentful and disregarded by the company to only return to his core enterprise of effective performance. In the below narrative, I ask Arturo to describe the degrees of his performance before and during the offshoring attempt. I wanted to see if different sets of circumstance could affect motivation to work especially because he was so resolute in describing his work-ethic as a part of who he inherently is as a person. This this area of his narrative, we can see the struggle between protecting neoliberal norms as self and resisting the impression of exploitation.

LR: So you think job performance differed when offshoring was announced?

Arturo: Yes.

LR: And how so?

Arturo: I think you again, you start to care less. And you may be- you're doing an application, you're not gonna have to see for another year. "I'm not even gonna be here next year, what do I care?"

LR: Mhm.

Arturo: You know? And uh plus you start to- start to resent some of the things the company makes you do in order to try and make the offshoring successful. We had to constantly monitor our work and rehash things that we've done with tracking the application and for every application we did, we had to go back two or three times because the consultants would ask us for more information to input into their data sources so that when they transferred the work they'd have all the information.

LR: So I want you to go back sequentially from when you were hired to when the temps were brought on, to when the first offshoring, second offshoring. How did your work habit flow during these periods of time? As far as how was your performance or how do you rate your performance?

Arturo: Well I think- I still rate my performance high and that's just because me as an individual. You know, I've always tried to do a good job. I was upset and you know demoralized but I still tried to do the best job I could.

LR: Mhm.

Arturo: When we were training them that was probably the most difficult time because it was just an overload of work. It was frustrating having to go back three, four times to retrieve certain data because the corporation would ask for different things instead of asking for everything at once and were constantly backtracking. That was a big issue for me.

LR: Mhm. So did you have your own work on top of training?

Arturo: Um how can I put it? When they went to this offshore company, I had just moved into licensing 'cause Tracy had left the company. A lot of people were leaving the company because they figured "I'll leave before I get kicked out".

LR: So it sounds like you were just trying to get by at this point.

Arturo: Yes. In hopes that it would fail and they would keep us all.

LR: How was the environment?

Arturo: Terrible.

LR: Terrible? And how so?

Arturo: Again, you know, you feel threatened everyday 'cause you're not getting a clear definitive line of when is your job gonna end, when are they gonna pick to offshore? And one minute they're saying oh we're gonna- it's gonna work. Then they're saying well we don't know. So it's like being on a rollercoaster. From day to day you'd hear different- and then you'd hear the whispers. You know I mean it's a big company so you start to hear a lot of uh rumors, factual, non-factual. And you jump at everything, you know?

LR: Did you still put in 110% or was it all like 100%?

Arturo: You know, I would be lying if I said everyday was 100%. You know, there's days you felt down but for the most part I think I've always tried to do the job. I mean that's just how I grew up, you know? I don't wanna be thought of ill. I get paid. I do an honest day's work; but very, very hard.

Throughout the first part of the case study, Arturo strived to prove that he was more than an outsourced employee. He wanted to prove to the department and himself that he was up to the challenge of learning a new set of skills even without a college degree and a bit older. He was unyielding in his rationalization of performances of work articulating his constitution of self. Therefore, it was unexpected when Arturo told me, without any reservation, that he lost meaning in his work and began to underperform. The precarity of offshoring became too much of a strain on Arturo, and it was reflected in his performance. As one of the trainers of the offshore consultant group, Arturo described his frustration with having to repeat and backtrack on the licenses that he already finished in

order for the consultant to learn the process. Along with feeling like he was working in circles, Arturo believed that he would not be employed by Company X in the future and became disappointed with his situation which lead him to disengage in the work.

Arturo explained that he did have a difficult time sustaining the high levels of performance expectations when faced with assisting in his own precarity by training the consultants. At the same moment, the workplace culture continued to become increasingly more negative. The uncertainty combined with the lack of appreciation created a difficult environment for Arturo to perform. The unknown combined with the difficulty of training someone to take your job put the department into a state of turmoil. Rumors replaced truth in order for the employees to make some sense out of the absence of communication. These factors alone would make any laborer stop to take pause and regard their positionality in the work. Arturo could no longer find reinforcement of his identity in performance because he was working to eliminate any possibilities of furthering himself due to the objective of the work. Even with all the obstacles of, lack of recognition, training replacements, rumors, and a difficult working environment Arturo still continued to perform, why?

The ideology of meritocracy, according to Arturo, is a fundamental element of his identity. Consequently, when his belief system of working hard to get rewarded collapsed he lost value and meaning in performing labor. Even though his attention to work faltered, he still continued to produce licenses and train the consultants. Therefore, when I asked him to rate his performance it is not a revelation to know that he still rated himself high as expressed in the interview above. Lorey (2006) argues that in order for

governmentality to thrive there must be an active participation by citizens to maintain control. She writes:

Therefore, in modern societies, the “art of governing”—which was another name given by Foucault (1991) to governmentality—does not primarily consist of being repressive, but instead, “inwardly held” self-discipline and self-control. It is the analysis of an order that is not only forced upon people, bodies, and things, but in which they are simultaneously an active part. (p. 3)

Again while emotionality is a critical factor in acclimating labor into neoliberal norms, the power of the worker/citizen supersedes feelings of exploitation, and sees them as a challenge to be conquered to preserve the status of being a U.S. American instead of an opportunity to challenging existing norms. Undoubtedly, Arturo is taking an active part in disciplining himself as predicated from these norms. Although, there is potential for resistance in these spaces of emotional disengagement, it will require dismantling one of the most powerful neoliberal discourses and our role in its constancy, the American Dream.

Conclusion

Offshoring and outsourcing create two sides of the same low cost coin created by skilled labor and sold at a profit. When a company is able to create a situation to incorporate outsourced workers to facilitate a move to offshore their jobs, we have come to a new understanding of precarious labor. This chapter has investigated how far companies will push the precarious workplace in controlling neoliberal labor. The further they stretched the bounds of insecurity the tighter labor held onto their beliefs of being the good worker/citizen through performance. Although, the performances of the participants wavered in their approaches to work, they all eventually came back to the security of hard work. In the same instance if they were not performing to their own

expectations the guilt and identity dissidence shadowed them in their everyday understandings. Jiron and Imilam (2014) explain that the power of neoliberal discourses transcend the workplace and enter into all spaces of our lived experiences. The authors contend that:

Indeed, in the same way in which the notion of productive time changes, productive space (or space for production) does too. Labour is not only carried out by the worker within a specific physical location, but through mobility, the very notion of workplace or work location becomes blurry. Division between private (non-productive) and working places is undermined in flexible production. (2014, p. 123)

Hence, the self-regulation of performance might have been challenged by the problematic incorporation of offshoring and their active participation in perpetuating precarity, the participants were still able to perform work. There is no longer a delineated space where work is regulated to the cubical. White-collar work demands flexibility in production and space.

Despite the participant's ability to sustain their work-ethic in favor of sustaining the embodied neoliberal norms, they still lost personal meaning in the performance of labor. This area of loss more than other precarious hits to their self-work created an adrift work force without the certainty of finding identity through work performance to hold onto. The moment between the loss of meaning and the subsequent disengagement should have been a space where resistance could cultivate. It is within this area I questioned the participants' resolve to work against their own wellbeing instead of resisting. But, fear and neoliberal norms provide a very powerful technology of governance that has become so embodied that it has become essentialized in performance. Similarly, to Butler's (2008) theory of gender performativity, neoliberal

discourses have created the equivalent result in performances of work. Out of all of the ways these participants have been exploited by Company X, their own participation in self-control is the most damaging.

This chapter has explored the ways in which self-worth, precarity, and performance shifted in their meanings through offshoring. The sustained location of precarity impacted the participants in various ways including removing their emotional attachments from the work. While they seemingly stopped caring about their performances of work they still maintained production levels to the satisfaction of the department. In the next chapter, I will continue this strain of emotional attachment to work. Neoliberal norms are able to control most effectively through the body. It is at the site of the body where we can begin to understand the perseverance of labor performances of through the impact of outsourcing and offshoring.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Neoliberalism crosses over all boundaries of what we once delineated as public and private spaces. It is within late capitalism where neoliberalism has stratified all aspects of our lived experiences and created an economy of self. Foucault (2010) supports this argument by writing, “Economics is not therefore the analysis of process; it is the analysis of an activity. So it is no longer the analysis of the historical logic of processes; it is the analysis of the internal rationality, the strategic programming of individuals’ activity” (p. 223). Whereas Marx was situated in the historical materialism, Foucault contends that we are now in an era of the self-rationalized economy. Neoliberalism functions on the macro level of governmentality through interventionist technologies and policies, but it creates an even more effective dissemination of power through the micro level of the individual. It is at the individual where power is circulated by discourse and embodied performances of neoliberal norms in order to create and reinforce meaning. Articulations of neoliberal power reverberate through our everyday practices. They are especially pronounced within U.S. American corporate culture.

This project questioned the material effects of rhetoric in the production of a service and within discourses surrounding outsourcing and offshoring. Particularly, by asking how neoliberal discourses shape understanding and performances of work, specifically when faced with job uncertainty due to offshoring or outsourcing. Moreover, this dissertation articulates how discourses of neoliberalism as normative ideals of the *homo oeconomicus* were negotiated during the phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring. Using ethnographic interviewing data, I questioned the material effects of rhetoric in the production of a service, specifically, processing licensing applications for beer and wine for sale in retail stores, and within discourses surrounding outsourcing and offshoring. With the attempt to get at the crux of the problem of neoliberalism on white-collar, service industry laborers, my two central questions were

- (1) What neoliberal discourses shape understanding and performances of work specifically when faced with job uncertainty due to offshoring or outsourcing
- (2) How are discourses of neoliberalism surrounding normative ideals of the *homo oeconomicus* negotiated when there is a possibility of outsourcing and offshoring?

These two research questions underline the entire trajectory of this dissertation. I attempted to examine neoliberalism's ability to control labor populations within the three walls of the corporate cubical. The results are more pervasive and disconcerting than I initially postulated before conducting the participant interviews. Indeed, neoliberal power supersedes self-preservation and interacts with labor populations in such a way that dictates the subsumption of norms will protect and secure workers from the immanence

of precarity. This in turn leaves labor vulnerable and reliant on the subjectification of neoliberal norms.

The Rhetorical Consequences of Neoliberalism

The site of Company X is where I began my research on service industry labor. The reason I chose this location was due to my personal involvement and knowledge of being an outsourced employee that was expected to perform and produce labor during an attempt to offshore the department. I had an insider understanding of the department, the work, the corporate culture, the emotions, and the corporal presence to help create a case study of the phenomena which included my positionality as a resource. My participants were all former co-workers that I worked in close proximity and created both a working and professional relationship. The four participants that agreed to be interviewed shared their rich, complex narratives, which provided a foundation for this dissertation. Foucault (2010) explained that in the past attempts to analyze labor, the individuality of the worker was lost in an attempt to make labor abstract. He argues that, “we adopt the point of view of the worker and, for the first time, ensure that the worker is not present in the economic analysis as an object – the object of supply and demand in the form of labor power – but as an active economic subject” (p. 223). Before labor was regarded without autonomy and emotion, only as a cog in the wheel of capital. As Ong (2006) theorized, neoliberalism evolved with economic technologies to create a new subjected and subjugated labor economy. Thus, this study incorporated a specific look into the lived experiences of labor while they try to make sense of their position in a Corporate 500 company; meanwhile this Corporate 500 company was looking to increase their bottom line by downsizing their workforce through outsourcing and offshoring. It is within the

narratives where this study takes a bottom up explanation to the neoliberal labor economy. This approach to the analysis incorporates a space where the participants express themselves as an active economic subjects embedded with autonomy and self-regulation.

The workplace is the very foundation on which neoliberal labor norms rhetorically circulate power. As Greene and Holiday-Nelson (2014) write, “To describe markets as rhetorical, as persuasive interactions, suggests the need to theorize rhetoric as part of the economy and not simply a way to argue about the economy” (p. 266). The population of the white-collar service laborers are exposed and controlled by norms via rhetorical acts through their work, peers, supervisors, corporate culture, and expectations of what it means to be a good U.S. citizen. This labor sector embodies neoliberalism by incorporating all of the principals that this economy values including being flexible, skilled, educated, competitive, individualistic, and reward driven. In an added incentive for labor to follow norms, neoliberal markets created a way to make labor unstable with the execution of free trade agreements and accesses to cheaper labor sources. This new labor source provides neoliberal labor markets with highly educated and skilled, as well as a non-existent middle class, which multi-national corporations exploit with promise of financial opportunities, while paying them a fraction of U.S. labor costs. This move decimated the manufacturing industry in the U.S. and continues to devastate many native populations in developing countries. The same motivation for greater profits by cutting labor costs in manufacturing now drive service industry employers to seek out equivalently matched labor sources in countries such as India, China, and the Philippines to efficiently and skillfully eradicate a need for highly paid U.S. American service

industry workers. Combined with existing embodied neoliberal norms, and an uncertain future, this economy is able to control labor populations to produce and reproduce security in the act of sustaining neoliberal power.

It is within the workplace and the act of producing labor where this case study creates the foundation for rhetorical exploration. Through the implementation of ethnographic interviews and evaluated using Reissman's (2008) thematic, dialogic, and performance analysis, the narratives of the white-collar employees from Company X located the voice of corporate labor. Using the most salient themes of self-worth/personal work-ethic, precarious feelings about work, and performances of work, I analyzed both phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring and discovered how neoliberal discourses shape personal identity through the act of work. Furthermore, created working conditions predicated upon keeping the worker in a constant state of insecurity forces labor to find security in existing and embodied norms of meritocracy, thereby reinforcing normative meaning in the body. Performance then exhibits the manifestation of the norms via the bodily acts of labor. The three interview themes of self-worth/work-ethic, precarity, and performances of production are defined within the boundaries of their own conditional definitions; however, they cross and interact with each other in a fluid methodology in order to rhetorically produce and reproduce neoliberal norms. Additionally, it was within the themes where the effects of neoliberalism emerged to form a comprehensive understanding of how labor operates within the constraints of outsourcing and offshoring.

Although many may regard this labor group at a privileged population within neoliberalism, few have examined the vulnerability that outsourcing and offshoring have perpetuated in this increasingly precarious workforce. Consequently, when I met up with

my former colleagues of the Licensing Department at Company X after my first year in the doctoral program, it came as a surprise that they suggested that I study them. After giving it much thought, the surprise transformed into purpose. Their experience was one that I shared and understood: the emotional price of being precarious labor. While we can locate service labor in a privileged group, there are many complexities that are largely ignored simply because the work is perceived as well-regarded. In fact, the work is delineated within the upper echelons of the labor hierarchy, but does that status also translate to a privileging of the individual corporate worker?

The Case Study: Outsourcing and Offshoring

This research began its exploration with the explanation of outsourced labor as a cheap labor option within the borders of the United States. All of the interviewees started their employment at Company X as either an in-house or agency temporary employees. Grace, Arturo, Will, and Beth were all hired to produce beer and wine licenses for Company X retail stores throughout the United States. According to the executives, the beer and wine project was not producing fast enough, therefore there was a need to bring on temporary, skilled, and expendable labor to further the project at a more acceptable rate. While the participants understood their situation as defined by its' temporary status they still held out hope for a possible opportunity of full-time employment. The possibility of security drove the participants to prove themselves to the department supervisors by finding self-worth and personal meaning through the production of work. The work produced and reinforced neoliberal norms that created a dependent relationship between performances of labor and citizenry. In other words, through neoliberalism labor

is required to find individualism and selfhood as defined by the success of production and degree of emotional investment.

Outsourcing allows for temporary employees to find potential in each assignment for security, especially when placed in a long-term project. If a temporary employee is in the market for full-time employment, they will use each placement opportunity to prove themselves as viable prospects for employment. These temps are in a precarious situation where they find themselves out of work and looking for security found in the potential stability of a career. These are the best type of temporary laborers for companies to take advantage of for their impeccable work-ethic. When employers can keep outsourced employees walking the fine line of insecurity and security, workers will sustain high production levels based upon the possibility of full-time employment. On the other side of the line is the embodied neoliberal norms defined by the *homo oeconomicus*. Again, Foucault (2010) defines *homo oeconomicus* as an entrepreneur of him-or-her self, a self-producer, and the sovereign of his/her own body. In other words, the *homo oeconomicus* is an economic subject who is, competitive, self-reliant, and individualistic. On one hand, the possibility of employment provides a powerful incentive to work hard, but the other hand holding onto the economic (wo)man will never let labor strive too far from the path of hard work without succumbing to the sentence of shame. Thus, self-regulation is incorporated and performed by every laborer in order to control labor subjection.

Outsourcing is a critical starting point where this project originates its focus and trajectory. Grounding the context of the participants' labor location within outsourcing allows for an accurate portrayal of the workplace timeframe and positionality of the workers. Outsourcing has proliferated in the last ten years and found a secure place in the

U.S. labor economy during the great recession of 2008. I joined as one of the first wave of temps to the beer and wine project in September of 2009. All of the in-house temps began working on the project in February of 2009, eight months before the first, second, and third wave of agency temps came onboard to accelerate the timeframe of the project. By the time Will came on board in October with the last influx, the entire project was primarily fueled by temp labor with the exception of three full-time employees who were considered Leads of the project. Within three months, the project slowed down due to the successful production of licenses for the retail establishments to sell beer and wine. Along with the effective level of production came dismissals and placements to other departments. The temps that were let go from the project were underperformers or people that did not have the right fit for the departmental culture. Many of these workers did not perform the norms associated with the *homo oeconomicus*, and were accordingly punished for the failure to adhere to the neoliberal norms. Being allowed to return to their cubical the following day justly rewarded the temporary employees that were successfully incorporating neoliberal expectations.

While not necessarily a positive reward the temps were expecting, the elimination and the subsequent continuation of their employment created both a sense of fear and satisfaction. The underlining anxiety of being temporary workers was a constant reminder of the precarity of their situation, however, it was muted throughout the workday until very public the firing of their co-workers. The project continued moving forward with the remaining temps taking over the licenses that were still in progress, thereby inheriting another employee's workload. The projects' remaining temps might have felt proud at their accomplishments to remain in their position, but the company saw these temps as an

opportunity to get more production value out of their performances while cutting labor costs. The outsourced workers might not have recognized the exploitation of their labor at the time, but it became evident after a majority of the store licenses were produced and the company brought in a consultant firm from India to begin the process of offshoring.

The offshoring began as a continuation from the accounting department's successful transfer to India. Because the licensing department fell under the umbrella of accounting they were the next in line for extradition. At this point, many of the outsourced workers had been on the project for close to a year. All of the remaining employees hoped that they had proved themselves enough to be considered for a full-time position. They all had worked at high levels to make the project successful on the front end and knew that they were needed when the licenses all needed renewing on the back end. The temps were dedicated to proving themselves as quality labor while finding self-fulfillment through doing the work. Therefore, when the announcement to offshore reached the cubicles, it created dissent among the ranks. The explanation that the work was too specialized and complicated to move fell into silence. The vice president and director of the accounting and licensing divisions attempted to protect the employees of the department by explaining the intricacies of the work, and were subsequently fired. When the offshoring company finally made their appearance the employees of the licensing department at Company X lost their autonomy.

In this moment, the outsourced employees who worked through the precarity of embodying the temporary status were tasked with taking on an even heavier load of uncertainty through the offshoring. In other words, there was possibility of full-time employment even a remote chance of security by proving their worth through work. With

offshoring, that risk the temps were willing to take by putting their bodies on the production line for is eradicated with the elimination of any work opportunities. In addition to the injury inflicted by the loss of autonomy and possible reward of employment, the temporary employees of the licensing department were required to train the consultants from the offshoring group to effectively recreate their jobs in order to successfully move production to India. Will seemed especially confused about the department's directive for the outsourced workers to train the offshore consultants. He could not understand why they would want someone who was not officially affiliated with Company X, and a temporary employee to have the responsibility to train someone else, let alone a worker with the potential to take away their jobs if he trained successfully. What Will could not comprehend was the use of a cheaper labor source to train an even cheaper labor pool allowed the company to profit. Furthermore, if the company was successful in moving the department to India, they would be able to terminate the temps without justification or a requirement to provide unemployment. Thus, the lower wages and disposability of the temporary employees created a financial advantage for Company X.

Implications

What the Company X did not account for was the emotional distress and disengagement that the offshoring caused the employees of the licensing department. The accumulation of time living with a precarious employment condition, the lack of acknowledgement by the company regarding their worth, the loss of autonomy, and the required training of the people that were there to take away their jobs, all of this amounted to the break in the participant's emotional labor chains. During the initial

outsourcing the participants put their emotional capital into finding self-worth and proving themselves as good worker/citizens. They incorporated all of the principal commandments required of neoliberal labor and found meaning and reinforcement of norms making them feel safe and supported in an uncertain workplace. Yet, they were also persuaded by the normative “truth” of working hard and being rewarded -- this concept originated from the neoliberal ideology of meritocracy. I found that in this case study, the ideology of meritocracy holds the greatest rhetorical significance for the participants and their ability to self-regulate based upon the deeply embodied performativity of self, specifically when Arturo states that his work ethic is inherently a part of him. Meritocracy has become naturalized in such a way that we base our worth as human beings and find our identity in comparison of how well we believe and act upon its merits. While meritocracy provided a sense of hope and a space of strong meaning for the participants to find security within the precarity of outsourcing, especially when Will was working to prove his worth to the department management, offshoring did its best to disrupt their faith.

Offshoring shattered all of the reinforced glass that surrounded the platform of meritocracy. The workers no longer had a safe space to retreat in order to strengthen their certainty in meritocracy because the company left them without any room to negotiate their worth. They made it clear that offshoring was going to succeed and all U.S. beer and wine employees would eventually be terminated. All of the self-control, emotional involvement, hard work, outstanding performances, and quality production values would not amount to the reward of full-time employment. In fact, if the participants kept up the rigor in a continuation of their outsourced selves they would effectively work themselves

into an insecure location of unemployment instead of secure full-time employment. Therefore, it came as no surprise during the course of the interviews when each participant expressed her or his inclination for resistance. These acts were reflected in slowing down production, diminishing the quality of work, and withdrawing emotional engagement. The disengagement of emotional labor is a critical turn within the trajectory of neoliberal studies. One of the most basic technologies of neoliberal power is the emotional chains that bind subjects to communicate, embody, and perform norms that perpetuate our attachment to an economy that invades both the public and the private spheres. Breaking the chains of emotional attachment to labor should have posed an opportunity for resistance by the participants. Furthermore, it should have cost a loss of control to neoliberal norms structuring the ridged restraints of the *homo oeconomicus*.

The break of emotionality with all its potential to restructure attitudes towards labor norms and the fallacy of meritocracy fell short as a condition with potential for resistance. In fact, while the participants did perform acts of resistance they all returned to the center of normative labor expectations after a short period of minor transgressions. I believe that the return to the center illuminates the immense power that neoliberal norms have over laboring bodies. For one to get pulled away from the edge of change or resistance due to the lack of recognition or reward is a very powerful indicator that neoliberal norms are indeed more persuasive than systemic glass ceilings. Even with the absence of finding purpose in work, the participants still performed adequately enough to appease the department managers, therefore a clear indication of the persuasiveness of norms. They however found fault in the reduction of quality and subsequently became angry with themselves for their perceived failures and with the company for putting them

in a position of defeat. The anger and frustration became a constant companion to the participants within the entire stage of offshoring and persisted during and after the failure of the attempt. Again, the negative reaction to feeling disposable, taken for granted, disenfranchised, and invisible labor should have been the fissure for discursive change or at the least, questions of normative truth.

Neoliberal norms proved to be a force of control that is increasingly more difficult to disengage with and transform meanings within its immanent economic domain. Within the neoliberal circulation of norms, discourses create knowledge informing the U.S. labor population what it means to be a good worker/citizen. Embodiment then takes these realizations and incorporates them into a corporal understanding where the body develops the ability to act. The body then becomes a site of ritualized patterns of normative behavior, which eventually becomes so embedded that the performance of these acts are naturalized. Each area of circulation persuades and negotiates with one another to disseminate meaning and reinforce normative expectations. None of these communicative actions operate in a vacuum. They are all created by discursive messages developed through market norms, policies, and technologies of governmentality. Thus the drive to re-center themselves within the shelter of normative behavior proved to be persuasive for the participants to resist. Therein lies the ultimate problematic with neoliberal power: the ability to resist.

If neoliberalism predicates itself on risk and reason, then so does the neoliberal citizen. Gibson and Graham position the economic body as follows, “Each body is governed by Reason or a locus of Reason in an irrational domain. Each is an organic unity that maintains itself by subsuming or displacing its exterior, producing integration

and wholeness as an effect” (1996, p. 103). They continue by stating that as the location of rationality the economy is a dominant technology that requires submission of all marginal thoughts to the rational order of the market. The idea of the rule of rationality along with Vallas and Cummins’s (2015) claim that identity production is based within both identity norms and work performance make a strong argument justifying the reasons why the participant’s chose to return to the center of normative reason. Although disappointing, the move back to rationality has been embedded within discourse and culture, as well as the body for a period of history that far outdates this moment of dissidence. It also emphasizes the entrenched power that the economy has over populations of labor in every division of employment. The need to create and recreate identity through work is reinforced by having to prove personal worth when faced with job insecurity. It is within the precarious labor situation where workers become even more attached to their work-ethic as a way to feel grounded and secure in their successful performances of citizenry. Such as with Arturo, the participants approached the insecurity of their work condition as a battle to be won with perseverance. The performances of production continued to be at high levels even when there was a removal of personal engagement. Thus, it is not a critical factor for neoliberalism to emotionally engage labor in their work. It is more important that employees are already primed by embodied discourses of meritocracy and citizenry. The overall population of labor would find more emotional well-being and meaning in work if they were emotionally engaged with the work, but as this point in the epoch of neoliberalism market, rationality has saturated the bodies of service industry labor.

Future Directions

One of the most salient implications that emerged from the data included the complicated relationship of emotional engagement and production. As I concluded above, while neoliberalism relies on emotion to further subjugate labor populations, it is no longer a requirement for production values to remain consistent. In the data, all of the Company X participants shared their experiences of losing meaning and their subsequent disengagement from the performances of labor to only continue with their production patterns after a short period of slow-down. Throughout the study, the employees lived with a constant reminder of their precarious employment situation. Once the offshoring attempt failed for the second time they replaced the space where fear resided and occupied it with anger. But, the anger and the disillusionment never detoured the production line too far off of its path.

The prior connection of emotional attachment to the work helped facilitate a knowledge foundation where the participants were able to interact and create new meanings from the discursive exchange of work and self-worth. They were able to connect their feelings about their essential values of work and the material performances of labor. Gutierrez-Rodriguez (2010) explains the affective relationship between labor and production as follows, What lies behind the commodity is not only a complex web of social relations or a cultural script of codification of value. Rather, there are a range of sensual experiences related to the labor force and its ability to feel (p. 126). Thus, the employees engaged with the work by emotionally entangling themselves as a part of the process of production. When labor has an emotional attachment to work there is a greater commitment to the value of production and loyalty to the company. We have all

experienced degrees of emotional attachment when working on our own research. There is a reason why we gravitate to various topics because we care. Therefore, I would like to further this research by interpreting emotional engagement and disengagement of work from the lens of affect.

There have been numerous publications about emotional attachment to labor, but none where they specifically address emotional detachment. This is an area of study that has been largely ignored in favor of discussing the impact of emotional capitalism on consumerism or particular types of work, which are primarily focused on pink-collar labor. Defining the emotional interdependence of the economy and labor populations Konings (2015) writes:

Far from being characterized by a growing externality of economy and sociality, capitalism operates through their imbrication: morality, faith, power, and emotion, the distinctive qualities of human association, are interiorized into the logic of the economy. (p. 2)

Konings argues that the economy operates through emotion facilitated by a number of systemic institutions. He further argues that these institutions are effective sites for market colonization where they articulate normative behavior through logic. Looking at neoliberal logic and rationality, I am able to better understand the intricacies of self-regulation based upon how these concepts discipline the body into the normative line. Likewise, I intend to look at affect as bodily response to an object, specifically the workplace and production. This response typically occurs through the biological and is projected linguistically through the expression of emotion of feeling. Although the words of emotion will never truly comprehend the effect on bodies, it is how labor can make sense of emotion in a symbolic world.

Brennan (2004) and Protevi (2009) define affect as bodies that are permutable and open to other bodies. By understanding that labor is not created through autonomous bodies, I can begin a sense making process of these unseen changes within my participants need to sustain production. In essence, affect can be used as a tool of judgment and understanding of emotional engagement and disengagement. Furthermore, Protevi articulates affect as a relational tool to understanding the world and the body. He writes, “Affect indicates that living bodies...do not negotiate their world solely—or even for the most part—by representing to themselves the features of the world, but by feeling what the can and cannot do in a particular situation” (p. 48). In addition, Gutierrez-Rodriguez (2010) understands affect as: “[...] not just an individually interiorized sensation but the sensorial incorporation of the social. It binds the singularity of feelings with its socioemotional corporeality, shaped in particular by relations of labor” (p. 130). Thus, if affect can infiltrate bodies then, in turn, bodies can communicate and control the workplace through immaterial discipline. However, if there is an awareness of the effect affect has on the workplace then labor can become aware of the bodily effects and how they manage labor. By learning how the body responds to a workplace culture, then employees can effectively create a somatic gate for resistance to neoliberal control. Populations of labor can begin to understand what the positionality of their bodies in the workplace and how neoliberal norms became naturalized and acted upon within performative labor, and thus enacting a new space for resistance.

Conclusion

This project originated from a former colleague’s suggestion and flourished into a dissertation that applied a theoretical concept of the economy as a way to interpret the

lived experiences of my participants and myself as economic subjects. As Lazzarato contends,

“For the majority of the population to become an economic subject (‘human capital, ‘entrepreneur of the self’) means no more than being compelled to manage declining wages and income, precarity, unemployment, and poverty in the same way one would manage a corporate balance-sheet” (2014, p. 9).

Indeed, the state of the neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* determines that the U.S. American service industry laborers reside in the new normal of precarious employment. In this case, it meant that the precarity of outsourcing was compounded upon by the implementation of offshoring. Both of these insecure states of labor acted concurrently to produce a workplace that was ripe with the possible for neoliberal control. In fact, the employees of the licensing department of Company X actively sought refuge in the learned, embodied, and performed norms of neoliberalism.

With the proliferation of outsourcing and the increasing trend of offshoring, the U.S. economy is in the midst of a labor crisis. As well, labor is in the heart of an existential situation where white-collar workers find themselves floating further away from the life preserver of meritocracy. Then, why do the workers of the world remain divided when they should unite under the declaration of eradicating precarity? The complexity and nuance of discursive power and the meanings of work are in constant movement, shifted and shaped by the turns by the rationality of the neoliberal market. Even while meanings are in a perpetual motion of creation, neoliberal norms always returned to and reinforced by meritocracy. No matter how many times the concept of working hard to be rewarded was shattered by precarity the participants kept their faith and devotion to the possibility of its emergence.

According to Foucault's (2004) interpretation of neoliberalism, power is not fixed between class relations but interlaced within all forms of social productions in which rhetoric plays a vital role in perpetuating power relations. I may have underestimated the influence of the discursive norm on the body of the worker, specifically, in terms of meritocracy. The interview data that exposed the performative production of labor even when the worker faced immanent job loss materialized the immense subjecting effect of neoliberalism on the body. It is along these lines where I hope this dissertation helped bring to light the vulnerable position of neoliberal labor and expand upon understandings of neoliberalism by interrogating power in the ostensibly enlightened and privileged world of corporate America.

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APPENDIX

Appendix (1)



DATE: August 17, 2013

TO: Leslie Rossman
FROM: University of Denver (DU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [496467-1] Rhetorical Consequences: Outsourcing and Offshoring Labor in Neoliberalism

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: August 17, 2013

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # *[enter category]*

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Denver (DU) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records. This approval is effective for a five-year period. For the duration of your research study, any changes in the proposed study must be reviewed and approved by the University of Denver IRB before implementation of those changes. Examples may include changes to the following:

1. experimental design
2. risk level
3. content of the study
4. materials attached to the original application
5. personnel

The University of Denver will terminate this project at the end of the five-year period unless otherwise instructed via correspondence with the Principal Investigator. Please submit a Final Report Form if the study is completed before the expiration date or if you are no longer affiliated with the University of Denver. You must submit a new application at the end of the five-year period if you wish to continue this study.

If you have any questions, please contact DU Research Compliance Office at (303) 871-4052 or irbadmin@du.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Denver (DU) IRB's records.