

“YOU CAN’T TEACH ‘EM ‘TIL YOU LOVE ‘EM”:  
EMOTIONAL LABOR, BUREAUCRACY, AND TEACHER BURNOUT IN THE  
AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

by  
Grayson Bodenheimer

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Approved by:

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Pavel Osinsky, Ph.D., Thesis Director

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Michael C. Behrent, Ph.D., Second Reader

---

stef m. shuster, Ph.D., Third Reader

---

W. Edward Folts, Ph.D., Departmental Honors Director

---

Jefford Vahlbusch, Ph.D., Director, The Honors College

## Abstract

Drawing on a series of interviews and a survey of North Carolina teachers, I examine teacher burnout in the American K-12 education system. I show how, because of the structure of education, teachers feel conflicted between the emotion norms of diverse professional expectations – including objectivity and affection – during interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. Ideologies shape teachers' perspectives towards their roles: self-responsible teachers invested pride in student outcomes and struggled against the affective neutrality of standardized testing, while communal teachers' dilution of educational responsibilities served as a beneficial negative case. Both ideologies expressed disillusionment over accountability measures that prescribed emotional labor in professional interaction. Self-responsible teachers were pre-disposed to occupational burnout due to their investment of pride into their role and student success. My findings suggest how low-level administrators have a fundamental role in shaping local organizational culture and teachers' experiences with burnout, specifically by recoupling professional expectations of emotional labor with teachers' day-to-day actions. This study exhibits the value of sociologically approaching interaction and burnout from the intersection of emotions and organizations.

Keywords: burnout, emotions, education, ideology, organizations

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION .....	7
REVIEW OF LITERATURE: THE EMOTIONAL ORGANIZATION .....	10
The Bureaucratic Structure of Emotion .....	10
The Educational Mythos of Objectivity .....	11
Individual and Organizational Ideologies .....	12
Emotions and Interaction in Education .....	13
Teacher Burnout .....	16
Feeling and Concealing Burnout in an Ideological Frame .....	17
METHODOLOGY .....	19
Data Collection .....	19
Surveys .....	19
Interviews .....	20
Data Analysis .....	22
Demographics .....	23
Limitations .....	24
RESULTS: EMOTION, BURNOUT, AND THE STRUCTURE OF IDEOLOGY .....	25
The Ideological Frame of Burnout .....	25

Self-Responsibility .....	26
Teacher-Student Bonds .....	26
Bureaucracy and Standardization .....	27
Affection and Emotional Labor .....	29
Conflict between Emotion Norms .....	30
Pride within Teaching Roles .....	30
Burnout within Interaction .....	31
Communal Responsibility .....	33
Ideological Shift towards Communal Responsibility .....	35
DISCUSSION .....	35
CONCLUSION .....	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	43
Appendix 1: Interview Schedule .....	51
Appendix 2: Survey Schedule .....	56
Appendix 3: Descriptive Characteristics of Teachers .....	70

Like hearing or seeing, feeling provides a useful set of clues in figuring out what is real. (Hochschild 1983: 31)

The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action. (Dewey 1916/2008: 361)

Egoism is the *perspectival* law of feeling according to which what is closer appears large and heavy, while in the distance everything decreases in size and weight. (Nietzsche 1883/2013:134)

With the advent of postindustrial capitalism in the United States came the shift from the dominance of the manufacturing industries to the surge of service industries (see Bell 1973). Service interactions, as documented by sociologists, resulted in the commodification of emotions as a form of asset through the use of emotional labor, or “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” in exchange for a wage (Hochschild 1983:7). A shift towards institutionalizing expectations for emotions portrayed on-the-job has contributed to increasing frequency of reports of occupational burnout, manifested in feelings of depersonalization, a lack of personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion in those who do ‘people-work’ (Maslach & Jackson 1982; Hochschild 1983). However, these concepts tend to neglect agency of service workers and place blame on a vague “bureaucracy” rather than explore the underlying assumptions upon which diverse organizations build their cultures and expectations of workers.

Previous major works on emotional labor and burnout (see Hochschild 1983; Brotheridge & Grandey 2002) concentrate their efforts in understanding ‘people work’ in the private service sector, oft neglecting the service interactions occurring within bureaucracy-laden public institutions (Weber 1922/1978). The American education system routinely negotiates its role as a public service organization with standardized goal-oriented expectations that necessitate the commodification of interaction with service recipients. Teachers, as the service representatives of the institution (Lipsky 1980), are expected to perform emotional labor, with organizational standards dictating how their “emotions are configured in particular ways in the changing and varying organizational life of schools” (Hargreaves 2001:1075). This expectation conflicts with teachers’ ability to apply emotional labor in diverse professional contexts and interactions (Hargreaves 2001; see also Leidner 1993). Such emotional labor can be an effective tool for

quelling misbehavior (Chang 2009) or earning deference (see Hallett 2007). Despite retaining a sense of agency, teachers must still navigate the oft-conflicting norms of their profession to remain both affectionate and objective in their roles. Consequently, teachers often report burnout and high rates of attrition (Farber 1991; Ingersoll & Merrill 2011). Through these processes, the American education system exemplifies the role of the organization in shaping individuals' feelings.

This project is motivated by the following research questions: How do teachers' ideologies, which serve as culturally-constructed lenses through which individuals make meaning of their situations (Zizek 2012; Goffman 1959), affect their perceptions and experiences of occupational burnout? How do conflicting emotion norms, as the situational "range of permissible feelings" (Gordon 1990:164), of teachers' professional roles further shape these experiences? Finally, how do organizational structures shape the expectations for the emotions that teachers portray, and how might these structural obligations contribute to teacher burnout?

In this paper, I examine the relationships between multiple and – at moments – competing influences, such as organizational expectations, professional norms, and the ideologies teachers hold, that come together to shape their views on their responsibilities as educators. I analyze how these competing influences contribute to their use of emotional labor and the subsequent impact on teacher burnout. Using data collected from in-depth interviews and surveys, I investigate how teachers defined situations and interactions through the lens of ideologies. I find that teachers' ideologies were shaped by conflicting professional norms that arose from the advent of standardized accountability in American schools.

The majority of teachers expressed an ideology of *self-responsibility*, through which they imbue their role with considerable individual responsibility for student outcomes. These teachers

invest their selves into their professional identities by taking credit – both positive and negative – for student outcomes. While the majority of respondents were self-responsible, it is worth noting that another small group were oriented towards what I refer to as a *communal* ideological perspective. Communal teachers believed that the responsibility of student outcomes is communally diluted between everyone involved in students' education. Rather than assuming sole responsibility for student outcomes, this small subset of teachers diminish their own agency to abdicate responsibilities onto students, parents, administrators, and colleagues. Communal teachers provide a unique negative case (see Sauder & McPherson 2009; Timmermans & Tavory 2012:180) through which I can better understand how teachers' interpretation of professional expectations impact their use of emotional labor and their experience of burnout.

I contribute to the extant scholarship on the sociology of emotions and education by integrating qualitative methodology with organizational studies, concentrating on teachers' experiences with professional expectations and burnout through the lenses of their ideological perspectives. Using data from teachers on their lived experiences, I illuminate how emotional labor, conflicts with administrators, frustrations with standards, and pride in occupational roles interact to shape the experience of teacher burnout. My analysis enriches the ongoing discussion of how experiences are shaped by localized processes of accountability (Hallett 2010; Diamond 2012) by focusing on how teacher ideologies of responsibility for student outcomes influence their use of emotional labor and their experiences of burnout. Ideologies, which I argue to be manifestations of discourse through the actions of individuals who inhabit social institutions, have tangible effects on structures. In the case of education, teachers' ideologies determine how they interpret professional expectations, their use of emotional labor to negotiate these expectations, and their experiences of burnout.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE: THE EMOTIONAL ORGANIZATION

### The Bureaucratic Structure of Emotion

Early work in organizational sociology downplayed the active role of emotions within bureaucratic structures, relying on unquestioned beliefs that these structures strictly utilized rational decision-making processes (Jackall 1989; Kanter 1977; Weber 1922/1978; Whyte 1956). Decades of organizational theorists accepted the “assumption of norms of rationality” in organizations (Meyer & Rowan 1977:343), reifying the cultural myths of “emotionally anorexic” structures (Fineman 1993: 9; Hallett 2010).

Developments in neo-institutional theory regarded individuals, and therefore organizations, as inhibited by bounded rationality rather than enveloped in a world of certain, predictable phenomena (Simon 2000). Theorists now argue that organizations are inhabited by individuals (Hallett & Ventresca 2006) whose praxis are often guided by their interpretations of contradictory organizational norms (Seo & Creed 2002; Berger & Luckmann 1966) as well as normative, rather than rational, organizational ideologies (Barley & Kunda 1992). Individuals’ decision-making processes became understood as bounded by limits of knowledge, experience, and time, as well as subject to their emotions (Hanoch 2002). Garfinkel (1967:113) illustrated how, even when clear and rational guidelines are provided for actors in a normalized setting, individuals are plagued by “discrepancies between their ideal accounts and their ‘actual practices.’” Through these processes, organizations are both reified by the individuals within institutions and reshaped by their interpretations of organizational norms (Giddens 1991; Hallett & Ventresca 2006).

Persistent myths of how an organization should appear – as structures in which the bureaucracy is guided by rational decision-making processes (see Ouchi & Wilkins 1985) – led

to the development of isomorphic organizational cultures, where various organizations increasingly resemble one another through their attempts to portray their missions, actions, and members from a positive perspective “[conforming] to broad cultural myths” (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Hallett 2010:53). As recognized four decades ago, “once institutionalized, rationality becomes a myth with explosive organizing potential” (Meyer & Rowan 1977:346).

### *The Educational Mythos of Objectivity*

Education has not been immune to isomorphic tendencies. Support for increased accountability and greater standardization in education led to the creation of the American accountability movement<sup>1</sup>, a series of “standards-based reform efforts” intended to strengthen schools by determining where they were struggling in specific schools and classrooms, providing state- and federal-level administrators with knowledge to increase student competency across all schools (Coburn, Hill, & Spillane 2016). Education administrators evaluate the performance of schools based on students’ performances on standardized tests (Hallett 2007; Figlio & Loeb 2011), resulting in a system of (assumed) equal education for all students through standardized curricula (Hochschild & Scovronick 2004). Recent products of this movement – henceforth referred to as *accountability* – include the Every Child Succeeds Act (a successor to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) and the accompanying Common Core State Standards Initiative, though mainstream discourse can be traced back to *A Nation at Risk*, a 1983 report produced by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (Coburn, Hill, & Spillane 2016).

To enforce accountability in schools, as in other institutions, the educational structure enforced regulations intended to relink the actions within schools with typical myths of how

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<sup>1</sup> Following the typology put forth by Saha and Dworkin (2009), I will specifically concentrate on local-level teacher accountability rather than state- and federally-focused accountability models.

schools should operate, a process of integrating “institutional myths and organizational activity” known as recoupling (Hallett 2010:53). While implausible to enforce full recoupling between teacher practices and educational policy, partial recoupling has occurred between teachers’ instruction and aspects of school curriculum via increased bureaucratic “rational-legal authority” (Diamond 2012; Hallett 2007:150). One example of partial recoupling is the autonomy teachers hold over pedagogy, but not over how to assess student comprehension. While this aspect of accountability has been acknowledged, little is known about the practices of recoupling teachers with professional emotion norms held for educators.

The epistemic distress that Hallett (2010: 53) observed as resulting from the recoupling of schools to their emotion norms is a reframing of occupational burnout via the “displacement of meaning, certainty, and expectations” at work. This experience of epistemic distress alienates workers from the meaning of their work, specifically through “the reification of the client relationship into an inanimate commodity” (Karger 1981: 275). This push to empirically evaluate both students and teachers through student test scores contributes to the alienation of teachers from their relationships with students through conflicting professional expectations within an objective-bureaucratic environment, as opposed to a framework of subjective professionally-applied agency. To state this differently, rather than acknowledging teachers’ expert knowledge of curricula and of students by providing them with the ability to subjectively assess students, educational standards prescribe an objective set of professional expectations to which teachers are expected to conform in order to standardize assessment.

### *Individual and Organizational Ideologies*

Education is a field predicated on various ideologies, a term closely aligned with Bourdieu’s *doxa*. From a sociological perspective, ideologies are “systems of meaning” (shuster

& Campos-Castillo 2017:24) that shape how people interpret situations and direct their actions (Swidler 1986:278). In this way, ideologies serve as frames through which individuals interpret their experience, including assumptions about professional expectations within organizations. It is through ideology that individuals are able to define situations and make meaning out of action and interaction (for a constructionist precursor to this notion, see Berger & Luckmann 1966).

Yet while the scholarship on education vaguely acknowledges teacher ideologies (see Westheimer 1999), many scholars continue to neglect the ideologies that teachers hold toward their responsibilities as teachers, or *role responsibility*. Though Bullough & Baughman (1997) found that burnout causes ideological shift, invoking feelings of futility between teachers' ideals and their experiences with standardization, this project appears to be the only work addressing how the ideological shift of teacher role responsibility impact teachers' sense of self or their actions.

### **Emotions and Interaction in Education**

The sociology of emotions has made little progress in entering the fields of education and burnout, despite the emotional nature of the teacher-student relationship (Carr 2006). Here, I use the terms *feeling* and *emotion* interchangeably when discussing teachers' experiences. The major distinction between the two is that *feeling* refers situational self-experiences as responses to various stimuli (Solomon 1977), while "emotions can be viewed as culturally delineated types of feelings" (Thoits 1989:318). Feelings are translated into emotions when labeled in a social-cultural context by the self or others. This process enables teachers to interpret their feelings, allowing for the conscious and rational manipulation of portrayed emotions via emotion work (see also Solomon 1997; Hochschild 1983).

In order to teach, teachers must engage in frequent and extended interactions with students (Carr 2006; Nias 1989). Teachers often form professional relationships with students, leading to experiences of affection as a “felt-need to love [students] and be loved [by students]” (Nias 1989:87). However, teachers will not always feel genuine affection for their students, nor will they perpetually love their occupation (Hargreaves 2001). As shown by Zembylas (2005), teachers struggle with maintaining their professional roles when confronted by misbehaving students, angry parents, or uncaring principals, but often fear that portraying their frustrations could lead to a loss of face or even of their job.

Due to the interpersonal nature of education, teaching requires the use of emotional labor to successfully navigate their various interactional responsibilities (see Philipp & Schüpbach 2010; cf. Carr 2006:28). The use of surface acting, as the intentional “disguising what we feel” and “pretending to feel what we do not” (Hochschild 1983:33), tends to increase teachers’ experiences of emotional exhaustion while diminishing perceptions of personal accomplishment (Basim, Begenirbas, & Yalcin 2013; Noor & Zainuddin 2011). While experiencing emotional exhaustion, teachers depend more on surface acting, creating a feedback loop (Philipp & Schüpbach 2010) that culminates in burnout (Carson 2006).

Despite these findings, surface acting can provide service workers with a method of attaching the consequences of on-the-job actions to work roles rather than their selves (Morris & Feldman 1996; Leidner 1993). Leidner (1993) explained how fast food workers attributed negativity from service recipients to their roles as employees rather than taking it personally; service recipients were portrayed as expressing anger at the character of employee and, therefore, at the organization rather than at the individual employee. Deep acting, as sincerity via the active manipulation of feeling (Hochschild 1983), has been found to be negatively correlated with

emotional exhaustion (Basim, Begenirbas, & Yalcin 2013), potentially providing benefits to teachers' mental and emotional health (Philipp & Schüpbach 2010). Despite its lack of negative outcomes, deep acting has similarly been shown to not be significantly effective at reducing feelings of burnout (Wagner, Barnes, & Scott 2013).

Numerous literature gaps highlight the inadequacies of emotional labor in education. Though teachers tend to expect frustrations with students and can cope accordingly (Chang 2009), there is less of an understanding of teachers' interactions with the bureaucratic elements of education: administrators and objective assessment. Literature in sociology and education have emphasized the struggles that teachers confront when educational standards ignore the emotional needs of the classroom (Hargreaves 2001) and when teachers feel they lack control over student success due to a perceived inadequacy of local administrators or methods of student assessment (Dworkin 1987). To navigate professional interactions, educators must both be affectionate towards students (Nias 1989) and affectively neutral when their actions carry standardized expectations, such as while grading (Cain 2003), the latter of which leaving "little room for [teachers'] care" for students (Hargreaves 2001:839).

Similarly, the lack of works investigating teachers' feelings of pride in their work poses a significant literature gap. In this sense, I use the term *pride* as defined by Scheff (2014:115) to describe "a favorable view of self, but one that has been earned." This term serves as a beneficial analog for personal accomplishment, the component of burnout understood as "feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people" (Maslach & Jackson 1981:101). In this sense, teacher pride is the culmination of feelings of earned deference<sup>2</sup> from students, administrators, and the public (see also Nias 1989). Therefore, bridging an analysis of

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<sup>2</sup> My choice of the term *deference* over *respect* refers to Goffman's (1967) work on deference as a reward for following display rules during performances.

emotions, burnout, and interaction is necessary to illuminate teachers' feelings and ideologies towards their occupations.

Because teachers are expected to express emotions on-the-job (Chang 2009) and act as street-level bureaucrats in their interactions with the public (Lipsky 1980), the education system is an ideal case study for analyzing the acknowledgement – and appropriation – of emotion norms within the organizational structures of modern bureaucracies. As teachers constitute a large swath of employees in education systems, teachers' experiences of emotions, and how emotions shape their interactions, are essential to the structuring of education at both macro- and micro-levels.

### **Teacher Burnout**

Burnout is a common experience among practitioners of emotional labor. This affliction manifests as a mental and emotional state that causes feelings of depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion in service workers, especially ones who do 'people-work' (Maslach & Jackson 1982). Burnout is comprised of both the presence of negative emotions (e.g., emotional exhaustion) and the absence of positive emotions (e.g., lack of personal accomplishment) (Maslach & Leiter 1997:28), and which exists as an emotional state of being on a continuum rather than permanent trait. Therefore, burnout is a *feeling* which occurs in the context of occupational service labor.

In the United States, individuals are erroneously held fully accountable for burning out (Maslach & Leiter 1997). This is due in part to the study of burnout being traditionally contained within the fields of occupational and organizational psychology rather than the considering the "organizational and social causes of stress" that act as the precipitating causes of burnout (Dworkin & Tobe 2012:200). Albrecht (2014) claims that "50% [of burnout] is your [the

employee's] fault." Most solutions provided for combatting burnout are based in individualistic coping mechanisms, largely ignoring social or structural efforts (Chang 2009; Dworkin 1987:159). These popular conceptions of burnout stand in opposition to the formulation of burnout provided by Maslach and Leiter (1997:31), who critique discourse asserting that "the individual bears full responsibility for them [their feelings of burnout]."

Teachers experience burnout at rates that are comparable to other service fields (Friedman & Farber 1992; Dworkin 1987). However, their burnout and attrition rates become more alarming when understood in the context of education, as teachers' degrees in education do not typically transfer to other occupations (see Ingersoll & Merrill 2011). As noted by Dworkin (1987), the conflation of burnout and attrition has prevented adequate consideration of burnout in education. The sparse works that do investigate teacher burnout (see Chang 2009; Dworkin & Tobe 2012) have yet to take factors of interaction, emotions, or organizational culture into consideration together, leaving teacher burnout a relatively misunderstood phenomenon.

### *Feeling and Concealing Burnout in an Ideological Frame*

Factors that contribute to burnout are, in part, modified by individuals' held ideologies. Actors enter into organizations with preconceived notions of their *role responsibilities*. Given the nature of education, teachers often enter their occupations with a specific understanding of the nature of teaching as directed by personal relationships with students (Carr 2006). The ideologies that teachers hold when entering their educational roles can stand in conflict with the professional expectations put forth in the cultural myths encompassed within educational standards (Hallett 2010), including their ideologies towards the feelings they expect to receive for accomplishing their work.

While lack of personal accomplishment has been recognized as one of three major components of burnout for decades (Maslach & Jackson 1981), few have taken this beyond psychological considerations of job satisfaction. This conception fails to consider the social emotion of pride (Scheff 1990) in various interactional-organizational contexts. Though Goffman (1959; 1967) provided ample attention to deference and shame in his work, neither he nor other sociologists have looked towards the position of pride in work roles or interaction (c.f. Scheff 1990; 2014). Even Scheff's (2014) conception of pride is structured in opposition to shame, the latter of which is considered the predominant social emotion in interaction.

A sociological perception of burnout implicates a different source of burnout that transcends individuals' feelings and actions: professional norms. Professionals are guided by both explicit and implicit norms that guide their emotional expression (Rafaeli & Sutton 1987). The increased expectations for accountability in education have led to greater standardization and, consequently, conflicting emotion norms. One example is grading students' written work, in which teachers must attempt to objectively assess student abilities – often with the help of a rubric – while also taking their knowledge of students' subjective interests, abilities, and situations into account (Cain 2003). While teachers believe in ideologies in which their work has the moral purpose of student growth, standardization tends towards equipping students with “the knowledge, understanding, and skills apt for a personally satisfying, socially responsible, and *economically productive life*” (Carr 2006:7, emphasis mine).

By constituting student success through standardized test scores, the education system is able to create an *ideological shift* in which teachers recoupling their actions with objective standards becomes the moral imperative and thus creates a moral order to retain control over teachers' actions (Hallett 2007). Along these lines, standardization has the potential to exacerbate

the existing conflict between the emotion norms of affection and affective neutrality in education, even leading to the crisis of burnout among American teachers.

Taken together, this work contributes to the sociology of emotions and organizational sociology by introducing a sociology of burnout as applied to the study of education. Through this consideration of burnout as both social-psychological and organizational, I progress social psychological and neo-institutional theory by offering a new lens through which researchers can observe the juncture of social discourse – manifested in ideologies, professional expectations, and bureaucratization – and everyday professional interaction.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Data Collection**

To investigate the ideologies framing teachers' feelings towards expectations of emotional labor and experiences of burnout, I collected data using a mixed-methodological approach including surveys and in-depth interviews. Through this design, I was able to approach teacher burnout from the unique perspective of teacher experiences in their own words (i.e., a phenomenological research design).

The data consisted of 213 completed survey responses and eight interviews. The use of structured surveys allowed for a broader-angle understanding of how teachers felt about specific issues in their occupations. The interviews provided in-depth qualitative data concerning teachers' interactions with coworkers and experiences of emotions related to their work. All data were made confidential, and all names used are pseudonyms. I received approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct this research.

#### *Surveys*

I distributed the survey through Qualtrics to 2,441 North Carolina public and charter school principals in April 2017. Principals who approved of the survey then distributed it to teachers on my behalf. Survey completion times ranged from ten to thirty-five minutes; this disparity was caused by variation in the lengths of responses to open-ended questions as well as various potential distractions. I chose to limit my survey to North Carolina teachers to promote comparability between interview and survey data.

In total, I received 281 survey responses. Only 213 teachers completed the survey due to a technological issue that obstructed teachers' attempts to proceed past the first page of questions. An accurate response rate is impossible to derive from available data, as the majority of principals either chose not to or were legally unable to distribute my survey. The majority of counties rejected the survey due to the varying requirements for research procedures conducted within the schools of each school district. Principals' stated justifications for not administering the survey included wishes to not impose any extracurricular obligations on their teachers, concerns with the topic of burnout, and disapproval with the format and layout of the survey.

The surveys were created using a priori theory and early emergent findings from the first two interviews conducted with American teachers. While the majority of the survey consisted of closed-ended questions (i.e., multiple choice, ranked choice), the open-ended questions provided key information concerning teachers' experiences via in-depth responses (for the complete survey, see Appendix 2). This survey asked broad questions about teachers' feelings towards standardization, work interactions, and experiences of burnout.

### *Interviews*

In total, I conducted eight interviews, four of which were with American teachers in North Carolina and four with Finnish teachers in Helsinki, Finland.<sup>3</sup> Interviews were in-depth and semi-structured, based on an interview schedule. Following an abductive approach, discussions often deviated from the interview schedule, concentrating around questions related to bureaucracy, interactions, and emotion norms. Due to the scale of this project, I will primarily focus on interviews conducted with American teachers in this study.

I used numerous sampling methods to contact teachers for potential interviews. In the United States, all teachers were contacted by education administrators on my behalf. This combined both convenience sampling and snowball sampling by relying on the networks of faculty and staff members at my educational institution. The American teachers that I interviewed were contacted by the Appalachian State University Office of Field Experiences in the Department of Education, and interested teachers contacted me directly. Two interviews were conducted in-person at the teachers' schools, while the other two were conducted via Skype.

In order to contact Finnish teachers, I resorted to a snowball sample through a professional relationship with a local school rector – the equivalent of an American principal. From this relationship, I was able to meet with teachers at two local primary schools, where I interviewed four teachers who agreed to an English-language interview. All interviews with Finnish teachers were conducted in their classrooms.

Interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to three hours and were conducted in-person in teachers' classrooms. The interviews were semi-structured, following a flexible schedule that allowed for teachers to expound upon relevant topics and ideas important to them. While

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<sup>3</sup> This location was chosen based on personal encounters with Finnish professors and academic works regarding the idiosyncrasies of the Finnish education system, including teachers' experiences of burnout (see Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli 2006)

interviewing, I chose to disclose information about my study in order to generate dialogue with teachers rather than withholding information to elicit specific responses from participants. By providing teachers with general information about my work, they were able to address questions directly and govern the course which our conversations followed. Teachers were then able to both attend to my questions and engage related topics that I may not have considered or deemed relevant beforehand. Findings reflect these choices through emergent themes towards which teachers gravitated.

### **Data Analysis**

I approached quantitative data analysis through surveys and the use of OLS descriptive statistics in SPSS. This methodology proved beneficial in investigating relationships between descriptive characteristics and variables concerning burnout, as well as relationships between emotional labor, burnout, and ideology. I analyzed the data using bivariate linear regressions in order to observe directional correlations; however, I chose not to test for direct causation due to the abductive framework of my analysis.

I analyzed interview transcripts and qualitative survey responses using an abductive method as a “form of reasoning through which we perceive the phenomenon as related to other observations” (Timmermans & Tavory 2012:171). I reflect upon my position as researcher and prioritize findings without the intention to “verify, falsify, or modify a [pre-existing] theory” (Timmermans & Tavory 2012:173). By approaching interviews with a sound theoretical foundation in literature on emotional labor and teacher burnout in education, I have been able to take teachers’ feelings and perspectives into consideration during data analysis. As per abductive analysis, I was able to observe emergent themes and patterns that neither myself nor other

scholars predicted by revisiting phenomena within the data. These findings broadly included pride, responsibility, and interaction.

The a priori theory-driven codes of significance for this project were emotional labor, relationships with principals, and teacher burnout. These codes served to provide a general structure to the data collection process while allowing for flexibility as patterns emerged from the data. Both emotional labor and teacher burnout remained prevalent in the data, in part due to their necessity in structuring the interviews and surveys, and relationships with principals was incorporated within discussions of bonds and ideologies of responsibility. This modification was inspired by data that emerged from interviews which required further investigation into existing sociological literature.

Qualitative data from both surveys and interviews was analyzed using Atlas.ti, which allowed for constant revisiting of data and codes. During this process, myriad substantive themes emerged across interviews and survey responses. Though the language in which these themes appeared varied (e.g., ego and pride), the use of open-ended questions in the survey and a semi-structured organization in the interviews provided ample data to verify relationships across responses.

My intentions during analysis were to search for patterns and recurrent themes that I had either observed in literature (for an explication of the role of literature in abductive theory, see Timmermans & Tavory 2012) or that teachers gravitated towards without my prompting. This method of data interpretation required a constant revisiting of the data to confirm the existence of patterns and to further interpret the meanings behind the patterns.

## **Demographics**

Overall, the survey respondents were homogenous (see Appendix 3). The majority of respondents were either white, female, married, or a combination of the three. Diversity could only be found in the distribution of teachers among geographic areas. Despite the lack of diversity in the data, the results mirror data on North Carolina teachers during the 2014-2015 academic calendar (UNC Educator Quality Dashboard 2017). 83% of my respondents were female, compared to the 79% of teachers in the state of North Carolina. While 84% of my respondents were white, 81% of North Carolina teachers in were white. The average years of experience among respondents was 14 years, and the state average was 12 years. Despite a low *N* and homogeneity among respondents, their demographic characteristics remain relatively representative of the state of North Carolina.

No descriptive characteristics had any significant impact on the use of emotional labor or burnout in the survey responses. While this was unexpected, the low level of diversity across most characteristics may explain the lack of significance. Though geographic area proved to be a diverse characteristic, the opinions of teachers from rural schools did not statistically deviate from those of their urban peers.

### **Limitations**

The limited geographical representation of American teachers provides both a limitation and a unique case study. The choice of North Carolina teachers as my sample population derived from three factors: the state's unique political atmosphere surrounding education, the accessibility of principal contact information, and comparability between interview and survey data. Teachers continually describe how cuts to education budget since 2012 dramatically influenced their perceptions of deference and bureaucratic efficacy. Therefore, North Carolina

represents an ideal case to investigate how state legislature impacts teachers' perceptions of deference from the public who elects state officials.

A second potential limitation to this work is response bias. Teachers disposed towards specific responses may have felt inclined to respond to the survey or specific questions in the survey. Potential bias implied by the response rate can be negated by two facts. First, teachers from 31 North Carolina counties completed the survey, providing representation for 31% of counties in the state. This broad representation included two charter schools as well as numerous Title 1 schools. Second, teachers' opinions were diverse, resulting in marked dichotomies on their feelings towards emotions and emotion work on-the-job, professional responsibilities, administrators, and educational standards.

## **RESULTS: EMOTION, BURNOUT, AND THE STRUCTURE OF IDEOLOGY**

I found two ideologies framed teachers' experiences of emotional labor and burnout in education: self-responsibility and communalism. Self-responsibility permeated every interview and most survey responses, while communalism proved to be a negative case that offers compelling insight into alternative ideologies. Because the results indicated pervasive ideologies framing teachers' feelings, both emotional labor and burnout were predicated on ideology. In summary, I found that self-responsible teachers were cynical of conflicting emotion norms towards the use of emotional labor when they believed it eroded their abilities to bond with students and help them achieve their goals, both academically and personally, while communal teachers felt burdened by an unfair distribution of responsibility for student outcomes.

### **The Ideological Frame of Burnout**

Two major ideologies shaped teachers' assumptions of their responsibilities. Their perceptions of received deference, pride, appropriate emotion norms, and burnout all related to

their predilections towards specific ideologies. Two major ideologies towards role responsibility appeared throughout the responses: self-responsibility and communal responsibility. Self-responsible teachers experienced pride in their work but rebelled against standardized testing, as it decreased their feelings of deference, autonomy, and of personally benefitting individual students. As a result, these teachers were likely to experience burnout through emotional exhaustion and feelings of a lack of personal accomplishment. Communal teachers acknowledged the role of agents other than themselves in student outcomes, focusing on the responsibilities of parents, administrators, and the students themselves in contributing to student success. Teachers with a communal disposition were defined, in part, by their experiences of depersonalization and cynicism, though this ideology appeared to be effective in preventing burnout as a consequence of a lack of deference.

Understanding ideologies as the systems of meaning through which individuals define situations (shuster & Campos-Castillo 2017), teachers come into education with a specific definition of the role of teachers and expectations for those in the role. In using the term "ideology," I am denoting how teachers perceive the roles encompassed within the institution of education, with regards to their role of teacher. By investigating emotional labor and burnout through teachers' ideologies, I provide a framework through which researchers can interpret experiences within social organizations.

### **Self-Responsibility**

Within both the surveys and interviews, teachers were more inclined towards ideologies of self-responsibility. These teachers held themselves accountable for student outcomes, leading to animosity towards bureaucratic obstacles that were perceived to be hindering their abilities to help students. For many of self-responsible teachers, emotional labor was a tool that they

agentically used in the classroom, but professional expectations of objective standards required an affectively-neutral emotional labor that was deemed unfavorable.

### *Teacher-Student Bonds*

Responsibilities towards students were dependent on teachers' bonds with students, whether individually or as a class. Self-responsible teachers described strong relationships with their classes, though the forms of the relationships (i.e., individual vs. whole classroom, congenial vs. sarcastic attitudes, etc.) appeared irrelevant. Sam elucidated the value of relationships with students, claiming that "I know that my students know that I care about their achievement [and] celebrate their success." For self-responsible teachers like Sam, this mutual understanding created an environment in which teachers could assess students' needs beyond the opinions of administrators.

Because teachers who held self-responsible ideologies tended towards individualistic approaches to teaching, their chief concerns were determining holistic definitions of student success for each individual. This led one respondent to confess that "I don't want students to feel like a failure," as it was a felt obligation to consider students' strengths and interests when grading. According to one respondent, the self-responsible teacher's duty is "believe that all students can learn and that it's the job of the teacher to figure out the key to each student to make learning happen for them." By building a relationship with students, some teachers felt better equipped to teach to the needs of their students, where mutual understanding created an environment in which teachers could assess students' needs beyond the opinions of administrators.

The interpersonal nature of the teacher-student relationship was accentuated in self-responsible teachers' ideologies. This perspective led some teachers to construe education as a

familial bond rather than a commodified service interaction. Elizabeth strongly felt that students were “my kids. I mean, they – we’re family. I really believe that.” Respondents similarly felt that, over the course of the school year, they became “more of a family.” Whether through genuine affection or continued use of deep acting, self-responsible teachers formed bonds with their students.

### *Bureaucracy and Standardization*

Self-responsible teachers preferred to teach to the students’ capabilities rather than holding them to specific standards, even when the content itself was believed to be objective and standardized. This is because standardization was perceived as eroding their responsibilities towards the students, making educators accountable to the bureaucratic standards rather than student outcomes. One respondent noted that the language of standardization “takes the joy out of teaching and learning.” These teachers took pride in their responsibilities towards their students, and felt that they were harming students by putting test scores over their perceptions of students’ best interests.

However, animosity was not directed towards standards as a whole. One teacher explained that “I don’t disagree with some standardization of curriculum, I disagree mostly with measuring students on standardized tests.” Rather, an overwhelming number of teachers derided objective assessment as undermining their abilities to, in Sam’s words, get students “to the point that they [are] ready for what comes next” – which self-responsible teachers believed to be subjective and dependent on each students’ interests and abilities.

Every teacher interviewed expressed frustrations towards preparing students for standardized tests. Elizabeth, who had been involved in the shaping of North Carolina standards for high school English, exemplified this in her assertion that “I think it [standardized grading] is

bogus. I hate testing.” She later elaborates this point: “I’ve got the standards. I’ve got the teaching of the standards. But I don’t understand how to test a standard like that on a standardized test. It, it doesn’t make any sense to me.” Like other teachers who took student success to be their responsibility, she felt that test scores did not represent student comprehension, with specific regard to students’ idiosyncratic interests and abilities. Survey respondents similarly argued against a “one system fits all” approach because of the “potential for my interpretation of the standards to be different from that on the test” as well as struggling with “whether I should grade based on ability.”

### *Affection and Emotional Labor*

Supporting Nias’ (1989) work, I found affective feelings for students to motivate teachers’ work in education, particularly for self-responsible teachers. Underlying this finding is the concerted effort necessary to maintain affective bonds with students. Bonds, interpreted as a “substantial mutual understanding of each other’s thoughts, feelings, and beliefs,” must be intentionally created and maintained by teachers (Scheff 1997:65). This effort can be seen in one respondent’s belief that “I’ve grown to love them *as I’ve gotten to know them* as individuals” (emphasis added).

This is a key context in which teachers autonomously chose to employ emotion work (Hargreaves 2001). Respondents frequently admitted their wish to bond with students, as reflected in one teacher’s claim that they “[loved] knowing that I have built a relationship with my students.” Similarly, Elizabeth admits that “I’ve grown to love the students;” this claim insinuates her not having felt affection towards her students at a previous time. Elizabeth later added that “it’s your job. You’re a professional. You’re doing your job! You’re on stage.” For Elizabeth, and many other teachers who responded to the survey, teachers make conscious

efforts to feel affection for their students. These teachers employ deep acting as a way to effectively teach because, as Elizabeth asserted, “you can’t teach ‘em ‘til you love ‘em.”

Even when teachers did not receive deference from parents, administrators, or the public, pride in student success appeared to buffer against burnout and contribute to ideologies of self-responsibility. Because of the positive feelings that self-responsible teachers receive from their work, some respondents spoke of their intentions to teach students to “[take] personal responsibility for their actions” and to “be a productive citizen in society.” Self-responsibility then becomes an ideological discourse that can be reified by instilling this feeling of responsibility into students (see Berger & Luckmann 1966).

#### *Conflict between Emotion Norms*

Teachers recognized that their affective feelings towards students were not the only emotion norms at work in their occupations. One respondent addressed this conflict in their tendency to “love and care for my students way more than I probably should.” This teacher labels themselves as deviant for being *too affectionate*. This is because accountability has brought with it an expectation of objectivity. One respondent noted that “it is difficult to assess a student whom you know is having problems at home and is stressed about the situation” because the students “have more on their mind than school work.” These teachers do not remonstrate the standards themselves, but rather the expectations of affective neutrality (Heise & Calhan 1995) within objective assessment.

Teachers became keenly aware of conflicting emotion norms when attempting to balance objective assessment with student situations. One respondent discussed her interactions with students “who are dealing with adult like emotional situations [and] are still held to the same

standard as the other students. Some face jail time, other are homeless but yet I have to grade all of their papers the same.”

### *Pride within Teaching Roles*

Though no teacher felt that their salaries were adequate in North Carolina, a surprising number of self-responsible teachers pointed towards a different justification for their work. During an extended account of his personal experiences with students, Sam described the extent to which he took responsibility for student wellbeing:

My family has been in the position to have... homeless teenagers live with us over the last 26 years that really had nowhere else to go and always were very successful in college because we were able to provide them with the support and the structure they needed at the time... And *I would not have been connected with those kids to know that there was a need if I had not been a teacher.* Do I feel extremely rewarded for being able to be there for them? Yes, I do. *Do I feel like they're part of our family? Yes, I do.* And so my rewards in teaching come from – it comes from this... I literally cannot go anywhere in this state without being recognized by one of the thousands of people that I am blessed to have come through my door in the classroom and I must have had an experience [sic] because none of them run from me when they see me. They all want to come up to me and tell me exactly what's going on with them now and *they're just thankful* that I helped get them in a better place.

This telling account provides an intimate understanding of how self-responsible teachers view themselves as accountable for student success and the pride that these teachers take in getting students to “a better place.” All of Sam’s negative experiences fell to the wayside in comparison to his pride in helping students succeed, reflecting how pride is derived from the deference students showed through their thankfulness for his efforts.

Pride was a precursor to other positive emotions. This is exhibited in a respondent’s declaration that “when they [students] succeed, I get the ‘warm fuzzies.’ This is what brings in the joy.” Self-responsible teachers feel pride in student successes because, as explained by one respondent, “you invested so much into these kids, and it is rewarding to see it have a positive

impact.” These teachers are able to feel “proud of their [students’] hard work” as a reflection of their own work and effort.

### *Burnout within Interaction*

Pride and deference are sourced directly in interaction; therefore, understanding interaction is vital to the study of burnout. Elizabeth exemplifies this in her vocal opinions on the subject of administration:

I felt burnt out the year before I came here. But mostly, *I was just frustrated with the people*. When you’re targeted by administrators, you get burned out because the only way I can function in the system is if I am working for someone who puts students’ best interests first. And if I’m working with someone who is targeting good teachers, they don’t have the students’ best interests [in mind]. And I can’t work like that. It disheartens me, that makes me lose faith in humanity.

Elizabeth felt burned out by two instances of interaction: targeted negative interaction by administrators, and the resulting affectively-neutral interactions that were expected of her in the classroom. This quote verifies the disastrous consequences of burnout for self-responsible teachers when teachers “lose faith in humanity.” Despite Elizabeth’s vehement belief that her job is to help students, she felt that administrators who enforced accountability standards harmed students. This deteriorated her feelings of pride – and therefore personal accomplishment – in her work.

Deference directly influenced Sam’s brush with burnout, as elucidated in his interaction with an administrator who cut his 9<sup>th</sup> grade physics course:

*It has nothing to do with if we think it was beneficial to [sic] the kids, we can’t measure your effectiveness as a teacher, so we cannot offer this course. So as someone who has dedicated your life to science education, not to be listened to, just because it wasn’t being done anywhere else – well, guess what? What they’re doing in other places wasn’t working [at his school]. So why are we going to do what they’re doing in other places?*

Self-responsible teachers took pride in their efforts to create an environment that boosts students towards their goals. One respondent lamented that “when I started teaching I was considered competent at determining content and success. Now the State of NC has to tell me what my content is and test my students to see if I am doing my job correctly.” Much like when Sam’s principal did not listen to him, the respondent felt unappreciated and lacked the deference that was central to their pride as an expert in education (Hallett 2007).

Self-responsible teachers showed no apprehension towards using emotional labor in the classroom. However, this was only true for emotional labor agentically applied in the classroom setting. Objectively assessing students required the use of affective neutrality, the antithesis of the self-responsible teachers’ roles. Elizabeth and Quinn both noted the use of emotional labor to portray negative emotions (i.e., controlled grief, anger) as a control mechanism, and numerous teachers extolled the benefits of depicting explicit congeniality towards students to build and maintain relationships. Using emotional labor to quell emotionality provoked an ironic frustration among self-responsible teachers, as it put objective measures before their knowledge of students. Teachers who felt that they have to hide their frustrations from students were significantly more likely to feel emotionally drained after working with students, implicating a correlation between suppressing emotions via emotional labor and emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout.

### **Communal Responsibility**

Not all teachers embraced the myriad responsibilities put upon teachers. While few respondents admitted to actively avoiding their duties as educators – which indicated burnout rather than an ideology – a theme emerged in which teachers fought against the belief that the duties were theirs alone. These teachers held ideologies in which responsibilities for student

success were diffused among the educational community rather than onto individual teachers. This ideology of communal responsibility both protected teachers from losing pride when students do not succeed in their education and allowed them to find joy in students overcoming obstacles alone. The communal ideology was not pervasive in teacher responses, but it serves as a negative case which provides an alternative understanding of how teachers interpreted standardization in education. Much like self-responsible teachers, communal teachers expressed satisfaction with their jobs when working with students, and felt joy at their success. However, the communal ideology is epitomized by diluting their own accountability for student outcomes, as represented by one respondent's belief that "there are so many factors in a person's life! I can be happy for positive change, but would be arrogant to try and take credit."

Multiple teachers argued that accountability structures had overburdened teachers, absconding the responsibilities of parents, administrators, and even students. This led to an inverse of self-responsible teachers' beliefs towards the familial nature of education: communal teachers felt that they had become their students' parents through unreasonable responsibilities, and that administrators too often sided with parents who felt that teachers should have greater duties towards their children. These teachers expressed an acceptance that they were "only a small part of the whole village that contributed to their success," meaning that student successes or failures fall not on teachers alone, but on the collective institution of education.

Ideologies of communal responsibility also focused on student effort. Some of these teachers attributed students' abilities and test scores to the amount of effort the student invested in their work. This was evident in one respondent's claim that "students don't really understand the pressure that teachers are under for them to perform well." This teacher abdicated their responsibility for student success by simultaneously deriding low student effort and the pressures

of standardized assessment. Other teachers shared this perception that students tend to do “the bare minimum in order to get it over with,” not realizing their own roles in their education.

Unlike self-responsible teachers, communal teachers did not express dissatisfaction with the use of emotional labor to remain objective. Rather, these teachers felt unwilling to use emotional labor when interacting with parents, administrators, and even students, as they voiced frustration that these individuals did not uphold their responsibilities for student outcomes. One respondent who felt that “there is no longer any accountability on the students or the parents” was frustrated with parents and students not playing their roles properly, thereby putting more responsibility on teachers. Similarly, one communal respondent conveyed exasperation that they were “expected year after year to accomplish more with fewer resources and less time,” indicating that the government was abdicating its responsibility to support teachers. Emotional labor becomes a tool which communal teachers use to obscure their frustrations with what they perceived as unfairly-increasing responsibilities.

#### *Ideological Shift towards Communal Responsibility*

Teacher ideologies did not prove to be stable. Though teachers noted their own shifts towards either communal or self-responsible ideologies, the greater pattern was towards a growing cynicism with experience, leading to a communal ideology. Typically, teachers noted shifting towards a communal ideology out of a cynicism concerning parents and guardians who did not support their children. Pride, as a derivative of student success, was often diminished by factors outside of teachers' individual controls, making communal teachers less vulnerable to the negative impacts of standardization.

In this sense, ideological shift provided a potential protective mechanism against burnout. Rather than actively having their feelings of pride diminished when students could not succeed,

communal teachers disregarded the role of pride in their work. This abdication of responsibility does not represent a lack of concern over student success, but instead a refusal to blame oneself for students' poor performance when innumerable factors could have contributed to the situation. Despite this potential, there remains ambiguity as to whether or not this adherence to cynicism towards the influence of their roles led communal teachers to experience burnout.

## **DISCUSSION**

Due to the complicated nature of ideology, no teachers displayed a strict adherence to one role responsibility. Teachers displayed incongruities and contradictions within their ideologies, as evidenced by teachers who hold self-responsible feelings, yet adhere to standards and displays of affective neutrality for the sake of students' test scores. Emotional displays that work in specific contexts and interactions may not be effective in others. Additionally, teachers experienced ideological shift over the course of their careers, as demonstrated by Sam's shift from rote education to a deeper consideration of student situations and efforts. The self is not a static being, but a fluid set of mindsets and experiences that adapt to situations (Goffman 1959; Giddens 1991).

The scant scholarly work that investigates teachers' ideologies, outside of student socialization, have found that teachers' ideologies towards their work – and how these come to be shaped by the organizational culture of each school – matter. Westheimer (1999) observed that teachers tended to view working as a community as either an instrumental means to an end (i.e., benefiting students) or as an intrinsic end in itself. These ideologies were reflected by the organizational cultures of the schools that Westheimer (1999) explored – though it would be dubious to claim a causal relationship between the ideologies and organizational cultures

studied. Rather, there exists a neglected relationship between teachers' held ideologies and their experienced within the institution of education.

Findings from surveys indicate that neither race nor sex influenced how teachers implemented emotional labor or experienced burnout. Despite the power differentials that accompany the use of emotional labor in regards to descriptive characteristics (see Hochschild 1983), my data did not reflect this relationship. The lack of diversity among North Carolina teachers likely influences this unexpected finding.

Data from the interviews provided a more nuanced understanding of gender in the workplace. Elizabeth was keenly aware of the gender differentials in her fully-female English department, noting that if her coworkers "were men, they'd just go out and have a beer, cuss each other and just go have a beer," but that "women don't forget." These female coworkers would engage in emotional labor to portray a sense of confidence, despite lingering feelings of inadequacy that drove fears of being fired. Neither of the male teachers interviewed expressed explicit feelings towards gender as an educator. As a woman trying to gain deference from her students, Elizabeth also noted how her gender required a stricter approach than that of her husband, another teacher. While the Finnish teachers were highly cognizant of gender in education, American teachers appeared to intentionally avoid the subject.

Rather than investigating organizational trends that inadvertently contribute to teacher burnout, some scholars follow the pervasive trend in studies of teacher burnout to turn towards principals as a key factor in causing or preventing teacher burnout. Specifically, this line of thought derives from scholars arguing for explicit training programs to encourage principals to confer greater deference to teachers (Brissie, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler 1988; Dworkin 1987; Van Maele & Van Houtte 2015). Disrespect from principals has similarly been shown to

negatively impact teachers and their senses of self-worth and personal accomplishment (see also Zembylas 2005). These recommendations, however, substitute the emotional labor of teachers with that of principals. Just as teachers may struggle with recoupling, principals are expected to act as school managers and perform emotional labor in order to effectively implement accountability reforms (Blackmore 2004).

Here, I suggest that teachers use emotional labor to build affectionate relationships with students. This is an extension of Bourdieu's (1990:53) notion of habitus as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions." In effect, the use of emotional labor – in this case, deep acting to feel and portray affection for students – becomes habitus, and teachers authentically come to love their students. Every teacher interviewed explicitly stated their love for their students, despite frustrations, because it was through this process – of deep acting until feelings for students became embodied as habitus – that led to bonding with students over the course of the academic year.

Therefore, I argue that the building of bonds in an educational environment represents an organizational context where teachers can choose to deep act and make their affection for students' habitus. When this is effective and teachers feel that they have built bonds with students, they feel accomplished as educators. This finding introduces a novel perspective for understanding interactions within service organizations by concentrating on how emotional labor shapes employees' feelings of pride as a preventative mechanism against burnout.

There is common ground between these emotion norms. The expectation of teachers to care for all students equally somewhat mirrors the expectation of teachers to grade students equally, regardless of their predilections. This is to say that, in some contexts, affection and affective neutrality both serve similar purposes. Bureaucratic standardization is not intended to

harm neither students nor teachers, but instead provide an objective basis upon which students can be compared and assessed. As the education system experienced isomorphic obligations to conform to the “business ideal of accountability” via objectivity, standards for teacher and school accountability became necessary to measure teacher efficacy (Hallett 2010:57).

Affection and affective neutrality can coexist, but conflicts between the two states of feeling prevent use of either effectively. As one teacher noted, “I may not believe standardized testing is accurate but I have an ethical dilemma when it comes to preparing students for the assessments. I may not believe in the assessment, but I feel it would be unethical not to prepare students for something that is required of them in the academic arena.” When teachers grade students’ works, they may be moved to take the students’ individual factors into account, thus letting their affection influence their assessment (Cain 2003). This would directly oppose the notion of objective, equal grading for each student; however, disregard of students’ personal situations (e.g., home lives, efforts at improvement) could lead to feelings of callousness and disregard, thereby countering their affection for students. Similarly, teachers may believe that standardized assessment is ineffective for assessing students’ individual abilities. If the teacher expressed their affection by tailoring their lessons towards the interests and abilities of students rather than standardized tests, students would be less likely to succeed on these tests, and teachers would have caused them harm rather than benefitted them.

## **CONCLUSION**

With the advent of school accountability, teachers are expected to balance emotions norms of affection for students and affective neutrality. Teachers’ held ideologies towards their role responsibilities shape their use of emotional labor in order to meet these expectations. Self-responsible teachers use emotional labor to build relationships with students, but experience

diminished feelings of pride when using emotional labor to portray depersonalized objectivity with students, administrators, and parents. For some, the consequence of this is burnout, where self-responsible teachers feel alienated from their ideological expectations of their responsibilities as teachers. Communal teachers are better able to avoid burnout, as they invest less pride in their roles, but remain at risk of cynicism when students are unable to succeed. Thus, teachers remain vulnerable to burnout in local organizations that expect extended use of emotional labor to portray conflicting emotion norms.

By addressing a relatively unquestioned topic, my work opens a new avenue of questions for future research. Numerous questions emerged from the data that I was unable to address in this piece. Most notably, the interviews I collected in Finland proved to be too diverse and rich to fit into the current iteration of my work. Interestingly, while Finnish teachers worked in a milieu that prioritized teachers' subjective assessment of students, providing teachers with ample feelings of deference, Finnish interviewees elaborated on aspects of bureaucratization that left Finnish teachers vulnerable to burnout: growing class sizes causing feelings of depersonalization, disregarding teacher input in the development of recent modifications to curricula, and discontentment with teacher-principal bonds caused strain for some Finnish teachers interviewed. An in-depth analysis of these findings is necessary to create an invaluable cross-cultural comparison of emotional labor, burnout, and ideology in the American and Finnish education systems.

Other emergent findings proved important, but were not developed to the point of inclusion in this work. The problem of stigma proved to haunt American teachers, as multiple respondents shared the sentiment that they “[didn’t] know any teachers who would admit to being ‘burned out’ to an administrator,” while one Finnish teacher admitted feelings of burnout

to her administrators without a fear of stigma. Related to the issue of stigma is that of power, as teachers' concerns over admitting burnout appeared to originate in fears of being fired. As some teachers felt obligated to the use of emotional labor to obscure their feelings, future work can address bureaucratization and emotional labor as forms of power over teachers. Lastly, the inclusion of Bourdieu's theories of doxa and habitus show potential for bridging how teachers' ideologies shape and are shaped by social structures and discourse.

There remain numerous directions in which future researchers can enrich this study. By investigating current educators, this study is unable to address teachers who have burned out and have left the system. One possible method to remedy this is a longitudinal study that follows teachers from their entering their occupations. Another direction includes the use of the Maslach Burnout Inventory to explicitly illuminate burnout rates in education. This project also provides the basis for future scholars to take this line of reasoning forward on a larger scale. Nationally-representative surveys, greater numbers of interviews, and ethnographic methodologies would build upon my work by providing an understanding of the prevalence of self-responsible and communal teachers.

Further inquiry is necessary to address the role of emotion norms in the everyday activities of organizations. While I have shown how teachers resent using emotional labor to portray affective neutrality when assessing student performance, information concerning how expectations for emotion norms are directly expressed, and how ideologies towards role responsibility influence their methods of applying emotional labor in varying situations, would contribute to greater discussions in social psychology.

Because my work intersects studies in the sociology of emotions and education from an individual-organizational perspective, I have provided a social constructionist foundation on

which scholars can shape educational policy. By approaching the social psychological topic of burnout in organizations within the novel frame of ideology, my work speaks to myriad crucial sociological issues. I implicate the impact of organizational recoupling processes on individuals in the form of burnout. Stated differently, my work suggests that scholars can use qualitative methods to investigate how ideology manifests in organizations in order to impact the future of educational policy.

My work contributes to the sociology of education by acknowledging the vital presence of ideologies and emotionality – via affection and affective neutrality – in schools, and how interaction shapes, and is shaped by emotions. Similarly, my work implies how the sociology of emotions can be relevantly applied to observe the interaction of macro decision-making processes on micro interactions, for example, in the field of healthcare by investigating the ideologies nurses carry into their jobs and how this impacts their interpretation of their professional expectations. Specifically, by approaching emotions and professional expectations from the frame of ideology, sociologists can use my work to investigate ideological shift as an effect of ideological shift via deep acting. As demonstrated in this work, intersecting emotions and education provides novel insights into how teachers interpret standards and the impacts that policies have on their wellbeing.

Rather than accepting burnout as the natural consequence of people work, or believing that teachers who burn out are to blame for their experiences, scholars must question the assumptions upon which institutions continue to exist and expand. The ideologies that teachers carry with them influence their interpretations of work expectations and how they are to implement educational policy in the classroom.

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## Appendix 1

### Interview Schedule

#### I. Background Information

*I would like to begin our time together learning a little bit about your background as an educator before we shift into talking about your emotional responses to your job, and relationships in the workplace:*

- How long have you been teaching? (and maybe where have you/are you teaching?)
- What grade(s) do you teach?
  - Probe: have you taught other grades in the past?
- What subjects do you teach?
  - Probe: have you taught other subjects in the past?
  - What is a typical class size that you teach in any given year?
- Tell me a little bit about the school where you currently teach?
  - Probe: heavy versus low parent involvement? Teacher turnover rates? Well-funded versus struggling? Private versus public?

#### II. Ideological Perspectives on Teaching

*I would like to ask you some questions about your teaching experiences*

- Tell me about your decision to become a teacher
  - Probe: was this your first career choice?

- What do you think are your most important responsibilities as a teacher? Follow-up:  
In your perspective, how much do administrators in your current school share your views?
- How do you go about achieving those responsibilities? What factors do you feel most prevent you from achieving these goals?
- Every teacher has a different way of assessing students' work. Some grade all students using the performance of others as a benchmark. Others assess each student individually, and without comparison to other students in class. Tell me a little bit about how you approach grading.
- Do you take into consideration students' home situations, personal struggles, or efforts at improvement when grading?
  - Probe: what are the difficulties of grading students' works?
- In what ways do you feel supported by your administration in reaching your goals in the classroom? In what ways do you feel like you and your administration are at odds? How do you handle differences in opinion with the administration?
- Do you feel that the being a teacher fits you well?

### **III. Emotional Management**

*In the sociology of education, there has been some recent attention to the role of emotions in shaping working professionals' experiences on the job. I would like to pick up on that line of thought and ask some questions about moments in your work life when you notice emotional responses, and what you do in those moments.*

*Let's begin with students*

- How do you approach working with students you care for but who do not academically do well?
- Tell me about a moment you felt particularly frustrated with your students. How did you deal with that frustration?
  - What about from your administrators? Parents?

*Let's turn a little bit to the workplace environment itself, and reflecting on your experiences...*

- How do you feel after interacting with principals or other administrators? What do you notice? (tell me about your relationships with X. After interacting with them, how do you feel about...)
- Probe: do you like working with your principal? Can you show your opinions and feelings in front of them?
- Can you share with me what happens at work when you feel emotions that maybe go against the norms of what teachers should feel?
  - Probe: In those instances, what do you notice, and how do you manage those emotions?
- Are there any specific aspects of your job that you feel are emotionally draining? How do you manage those feelings?
- Share with me your greatest stressors as a teacher
  - Probe: how do you cope with these stressors? Do you have support from within the school system, such as your principal?
- Who do you turn to, to discuss successes and challenges in your job? In what ways do these people provide emotional support, brainstorming, etc.?

#### **IV. Spill Over from Work into Home Life**

*Another topic right now in the sociology of work and health is how work life can spill over into home life, with recent attention on work-life balance. I would like to conclude our time together asking a few questions about your experiences in this area:*

- Tell me a little bit about how you maintain a balance between work and personal life?
- How much time outside of class do you spend on work? Do you feel that you have enough time “off” of work? Probe: Share more...
  - Follow-up: If not, do you feel that you have enough time to spend with family and friends after work?
- Tell me about how you feel when you get home at the end of the day
  - Probe: drained? energized? let down? fulfilled?

#### **V. Wrap-Up**

- If you could change anything about your job, what would it be and why?
- I want to open up space if there are other challenges of your job as a teacher that we have not yet discussed.
- And to end on a positive note, what are some of the joyful aspects of your job that have not yet come up?
  - Probe: what feels most rewarding to you about your profession?

#### **VI. Post-Interview Survey**

*Now we will end with a short post-interview survey. If you have any comments or questions for me, please feel free to share them with me.*

*Please take a moment to answer these demographic questions:*

1. In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How do you identify in terms of gender? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How do you identify in terms of race and/or ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your current relationship status? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. If you are partnered, what is your partner's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you have children? (Choose: Y/N)
  - a. If so, how many do children do you have, and how old are they?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your highest level of educational attainment? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2

## Survey Schedule

Please answer all questions with the response that most closely describes your feelings.

1. What grade(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What subject(s) do you teach? (Choose all that apply)
  - English/language arts
  - Mathematics
  - Science
  - Social studies
  - Fine arts
  - Physical education
  - Foreign language
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. In which county do you teach?
5. Thinking over the last semester, how have you noticed your attitudes towards students generally changing from the beginning to the end of the semester?
6. Over your teaching career, have you any of your student had behavioral issues? (If no, skip to question 10)
  - Yes
  - No

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. How often were you frustrated by these students?

Always

Most of the time

About half the time

Sometimes

Never

8. How often did you have to adapt your personality in order to work with these students?

Always

Most of the time

About half the time

Sometimes

Never

9. Did any of these students' behaviors improve?

Yes

No

10. Student disruptions during class occur:

Daily

4-6 times a week

2-3 times a week

Once a week

Rarely

11. Student disruptions during class make me feel exhausted

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

12. In general, how much do you care for your students?

I do not become emotionally invested in students ----- I care a great deal for my students

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

13. In general, how much do you like your students?

I do not like my students ----- I love my students

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

14. While I am grading, I want to take students' home situations, personal struggles, or efforts at improvement into consideration

Clearly describes my feelings

Mostly describes my feelings

Moderately describes my feelings

Slightly describes my feelings

Does not describe my feelings

15. For me, assessing student performance in an objective manner is:

- Extremely easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Somewhat difficult
- Extremely difficult

16. Please describe any difficulties you experience when grading students' work: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Some people argue that the standardization is effective at providing all students with an equal education, regardless of race, sex, ethnicity, gender, creed, or religion. Others believe that individual students have different learning styles and learning speeds and are stifled by a standardized curriculum or pedagogy.

Do you believe that standardized testing is an adequate measure of a student's abilities?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

18. How do you feel about the level of autonomy you have over your teaching pedagogy (i.e., how you teach)?

- Extremely adequate
- Moderately adequate

- Slightly adequate
- Neither adequate nor inadequate
- Slightly inadequate
- Moderately inadequate
- Extremely inadequate
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

19. Please describe below any feelings that were not addressed: \_\_\_\_\_

20. I miss my students when they move on to the next grade

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

21. Seeing positive change in students' lives makes me feel that I have done a good job

- Clearly describes my feelings
- Mostly describes my feelings
- Moderately describes my feelings
- Slightly describes my feelings
- Does not describe my feelings

22. Please share a brief description of why or why not: \_\_\_\_\_

23. Please rank from 1-8: In your opinion, the most important responsibilities for a teacher are to:

- Help students academically succeed
- Help students overcome behavioral obstacles
- Prepare students for adult life
- Prepare students for standardized tests
- Instill discipline into students
- Work with the class as a whole to promote collaboration
- Work with individual children to promote independent thinking
- Other

24. Please provide a brief explanation of why you chose "Other": \_\_\_\_\_

25. Please rank from 1-8: In your opinion, administrators believe the most important responsibilities for teachers are to:

- Help students academically succeed
- Help students overcome behavioral obstacles
- Prepare students for adult life
- Prepare students for standardized tests
- Instill discipline into students
- Work with the class as a whole to promote collaboration
- Work with individual children to promote independent thinking
- Other

26. Please provide a brief explanation of why you chose "Other": \_\_\_\_\_

27. I feel that I can be myself around:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. I feel that the role of teacher fits well with my personality:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

29. To what degree does teaching make you feel:

Emotionally Drained ----- Emotionally Energized

0    1    2    3    4    5    6                      7    8    9    10

30. I value appreciation from:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other administrators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

31. I often feel emotionally drained after working with:

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other administrators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

32. When I am struggling with a work-related issue, administration is helpful:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

33. My principal understands teachers well:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

34. My principal cares for teachers:

- Strongly agree

- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

35. If a teacher is feeling burned out, my principal tries to help:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

36. Please provide any extra information below: \_\_\_\_\_

37. Please rank from 1-5: From which groups does praise cause the most positive emotions?

- Students
- Parents
- Colleagues
- Principals
- Other administrators

38. As a teacher, I feel appreciate by the community:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

39. How do you feel about the amount of time you get to spend with family and friends after work?

Extremely satisfied

Moderately satisfied

Slightly satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Slightly dissatisfied

Moderately dissatisfied

Extremely dissatisfied

40. I think about my students when I am not at work:

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

41. I often feel frustrated with my job:

Clearly describes my feelings

Mostly describes my feelings

Moderately describes my feelings

Slightly describes my feelings

Does not describe my feelings

42. If so, what are your greatest sources of frustration?: \_\_\_\_\_

43. I have to hide my frustration with my students from them:

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

44. Rank from 1-5: When emotionally exhausted, I can turn to:

Colleagues

Friends

My principal

Family

Other

45. I do this job because (choose all that apply):

I love my students

I love my colleagues

I love my administrators (principal, superintendent, etc.)

It makes me feel like part of the community

For the monetary benefits (income, insurance, etc.)

- I want to make a difference
- Career opportunities
- It seemed easy
- Other

46. Please explain any additional reasons you chose to be a teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

47. I love being a teacher:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

48. If I had to choose becoming a teacher again, I would do so:

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

49. Why or why not?: \_\_\_\_\_

50. What are current obstacles to effective teaching?: \_\_\_\_\_

51. Gender:

- Female

- Male
- Transgender
- Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer Not to Answer

52. In what year were you born?: \_\_\_\_\_

53. Ethnicity (choose all that apply):

- Non-Hispanic White
- Black or African American
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Hispanic
- Other, Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer Not to Answer

54. Marital status:

- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Partnered
- Never married
- Prefer Not to Answer

55. Children:

- Yes
- No
- Expecting
- Prefer Not to Answer

56. Highest level of educational attainment:

- Some college
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

57. If you would be interested in participating in a one-hour Skype interview to explore these issues in more depth, please enter your email information below.

N.b. This is optional, and providing your email is not a commitment to a further interview:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3

Descriptive Characteristics of Teachers<sup>4</sup>

Characteristic	Frequency (n) <sup>5</sup>	% of responses
Sex	198	100
Female	164	83
Male	29	15
Prefer not to answer	5	3
Race	193	100
Non-Hispanic White	163	84
Black	10	5
Hispanic	4	2
Multiracial	3	2
Prefer not to answer	13	7
Marital Status	194	100
Married	134	69
Divorced	17	9
Separated	2	1
Partnered	3	2
Never married	30	15
Prefer not to answer	8	4
Family Status	195	100
Has children	133	68
Does not have children	52	27
Expecting	4	2
Prefer not to answer	6	3
County <sup>6</sup>	192	100
Rural	83	43
Suburban	68	35
Urban	41	21
Highest level of education	198	100
Bachelor's degree	86	43

<sup>4</sup> The number of respondents differs in each category because some respondents chose to not to complete specific demographic questions, with one respondent criticizing my inclusion of a transgender option.

<sup>5</sup> Due to rounding, responses may not add to 100%.

<sup>6</sup> School geographic designation is determined by the population density of the counties within which teachers worked (NC Rural Center 2016).

Determination of school geographic designation is based on the county in which teachers taught and the designation determined by the North Carolina Rural Center. <http://www.ncruralcenter.org/rural-county-ma>

Master's degree	100	51
Doctoral degree	1	<1
Other <sup>7</sup>	11	6
Years of experience in education	203	100
1-4 years	42	21
5-9 years	40	20
10-19 years	68	33
20+ years	53	26
Grades taught <sup>8</sup>	237 201	100
Elementary	88	44
Middle	46	23
High	67	33

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<sup>7</sup> Responses under "Other" included National Board Certification (six respondents), work on a postgraduate degree (four respondents), and an additional specialist degree (one respondent).

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this project, I define elementary school teachers as teaching grades pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, middle school teachers as teaching 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and high school teachers as teaching 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.