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Teacher Alienation: Reconceptualizing the Educational Work Environment

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Reconceptualizing the Educational Work Environment

by

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Teacher Alienation: Reconceptualizing the Educational

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ABSTRACT

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The following dissertation examined the relationship between dissatisfaction found within teacher working conditions and Melvin Seeman's theory of alienation. More specifically, it showed that all forms of teacher dissatisfaction engender feelings of alienation and that the oppressive nature of alienation is the root cause of all the negative consequences associated with teacher dissatisfaction. After an introduction, the literature review presents detailed descriptions of Seeman's theory of alienation, Paulo Freire's theory of empowerment, and the latest information surrounding the issue of teacher dissatisfaction. Next, qualitative narratives from interviews with six teachers about their experiences with dissatisfaction are presented. The researcher then shows how the participants' answers matched the information from the literature surrounding dissatisfaction. The alienation framework is then applied to the data to show its presence within the teachers' experiences. Once the narratives are shown to be connected to both the dissatisfaction and alienation literature, the researcher discusses how alienation is an

inextricable part of dissatisfying working conditions. An analysis is then presented to explain how alienation plays a foundational role in creating detrimental educational environments. Finally, possible solutions and further research possibilities are detailed.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"We cannot solve our problems using the same thinking we used when we created them."

--Albert Einstein

The Problem of Teacher Retention

Teacher turnover, also known as mobility or attrition, is an ongoing problem in schools across the United States, leading to concerns about consistency, stability, and quality of instruction in the classroom (Boe & Bobbitt, 1997). Lindqvist, Ulla Nordänger, and Rickard Carlsson (2014) have noted that the most common response to overcome such a shortage of teachers is to try to increase recruitment into the profession. In response, a number of campaigns to attract young people into teaching have been launched during recent years. Teach for America represents one of the numerous efforts to expand the pool of potential teachers (Lindqvist et al., 2014). Policymakers, economists, and educational researchers have highlighted the importance of recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, given the pivotal role they play in the learning process, yet retention issues continue to plague schools (Keigher, 2010). Richard Ingersoll (2001) suggested that instead of simply creating more teachers, we should explore why teachers leave. However, the problem education continues to face it that it does not have a clear picture of how working conditions demotivate teachers (Garrett, 1999). Indeed, education continues to view teacher dissatisfaction with broad, generalized analyses, which fail to yield adequate data necessary for effective change.

Research indicates that the major problem for schools is not a shortage of teachers coming into the system (Lindqvist et al., 2014). The real problem seems to be that many new

college graduates choose not to go in to teaching at all or, more importantly, decide to leave after just a few years in the profession (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002). Studies from the United States estimate that only 40% to 50% of novice teachers are still working in the profession five years after graduation (Ingersoll, 2003). Such reports have emerged alongside evidence that teachers who are more academically skilled than their peers leave at higher rates (Lankford et al., 2002). Furthermore, new teacher attrition rates tend to be higher in schools serving relatively high percentages of minority, low-income, and/or low-performing students (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005).

High teacher turnover rates in schools create instability, which hinders student achievement and the implementation of reforms (Curtis, 2012). Echoing earlier comments, researchers Robin Henke, Xianglei Chen, and Sonya Geis (2000) and Richard Murname and Randall Olson (1990) noted it is the best and brightest new teachers who appear most likely to leave. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2003) report, for every teacher who leaves the classroom, a new and likely inexperienced teacher takes his or her place, negatively impacting the quality of teaching and learning.

Lindqvist et al. (2014) highlighted that the importance of teacher attrition lies in its costs to schools and the effects it has on large numbers of students. They argued that a less stable teaching force results in a lower quality educational environment and organizational instability. Research indicates that teacher turnover has a harmful effect on student achievement, especially in poorly performing schools, and can even impact students whose teachers remain in the classroom from year to year (Lindqvist et al., 2014). Additionally, high teacher turnover is monetarily costly (Curtis, 2012). The time and effort to recruit and train new teachers, in order to

replace the number of teachers lost to attrition, are major financial burdens. Nationally, the costs associated with teacher turnover are estimated to be over $7 billion a year (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003).

Education, described as the “profession that eats its young” (Osborne, 1992, p. 4), continues to include discussions centered on how to lure and retain quality educators, as well as why the system persists in failing to do so adequately. Andy Hargreaves (1994) discussed a number of factors that can interfere with a teacher’s sense of job satisfaction, which can foster negative perceptions on the profession and self-worth. These include the monotony of daily routines, a lack of motivation and discipline on the students’ part, and a lack of support and appreciation from colleagues and administration. Alongside these identified conditions, teachers have reported leaving the profession due to strong feelings of not being involved in school decisions (Ingersoll, 2001). Teachers who feel as if they do not have control over their own classroom or school decisions tend to be more frustrated with their teaching positions and are more vulnerable to feelings of dissatisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001). Salary, too, is often talked about when discussing teacher attrition. Cassandra Guarino, Lucrecia Santibañez, and Glenn Daley (2006) noted that higher salaries were a deterrent to teachers leaving the profession.

However, maybe more significant is that Kay Wilhelm, Jodie Dewhurst-Savellis, and Gordon Parker (2000) suggested that factors related to working conditions may be of less importance than individuals’ perceptions of the profession. Maria Flores and Christopher Day’s (2006) study on teachers’ experiences showed that their participants began to work in conditions of "strategic compliance" (p. 229) in which the realities of teaching in a high-stakes, bureaucratic environment were at odds with the teachers' perception of what teaching should be. They found

that when teachers entered the profession, they were excited and enthusiastic. However, upon beginning their position, they were forced conform to what was being done within their school landscape as prescribed by a multitude of outside influential factors (Flores & Day, 2006). This forced compliance was not only to instruction, methods, and curriculum, but also to the attitudes and values of being a teacher. Flores and Day (2006) noted that as teachers were compelled to follow this strategic compliance, a "sense of giving up" became apparent in their stories (p. 229).

Flores and Day's (2006) study speaks to a critical component that seems to be missing from many discussions surrounding teacher dissatisfaction and attrition. While many researchers (Hargreaves, 1994; Ingersoll, 2001, 2003; Lindqvist et al., 2014) have pointed to clear conditions that cause teachers to leave the profession, few highlight how such conditions affect teachers on psychological and emotional levels and how they, in turn, play into teachers' satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to the profession. Unfortunately, because educational reforms have been so focused on improving student outcomes (i.e., No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, Common Core), less attention has been given to how they affect teachers' commitment to the profession and the implications of having dissatisfied educators.

Neoliberal Encroachment into Education

Since the early 20th century, accountability in education was synonymous with efficiency, but the meaning of efficiency began to change around 1965 following the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which required annual audits of program effectiveness (Ambrosio, 2013). Larry Cuban (2004) argued that since 1965, systems of accountability have seen good schools as ones that efficiently used their resources to yield improved student academic achievement as measured by test scores. This movement

strengthened through the1970s as a new accountability system based on standardized achievement tests gave way to the management of public schools by for-profit business models (Ambrosio, 2013). In addition to garnering the support of high level educational leaders, the national visibility and importance of accountability in education was significantly heightened when President Nixon, on March 3, 1970, sent a pointed message on education reform in which he strongly endorsed the goals of the accountability movement declaring that, "school administrators and school teachers alike are responsible for their performance and it is in their interest as well as in the interests of their pupils that they be held accountable" (Special Message to Congress on Education Reform, 1970). Soon after, Terrell Bell, the deputy commissioner in the Office of Education, delivered a major policy speech on education in which he declared that Washington "wants to be sure that every dollar invested in an educational program will produce a payoff that can be measured and that can be proved" (1972). By the mid 1970s, the move toward modern metrics and accountability, along their with their corresponding rationale and rhetoric, was underway.

John Ambrosio (2013) noted that in the early 1980s this new trend in accountability was transformed by a rapidly changing global political and economic context. He described how the new accountability system was appropriated and attached to a neoliberal political agenda that extended to many areas of social and economic life, including public education. Michael Apple (2006) illustrated how this change occurred during President Ronald Reagan's first term when the discourse in education and purpose of accountability shifted from a primary concern for optimizing resource inputs to achieve educational outputs to a drive to create policies and practices that aimed to produce social and systemic conditions within schools consistent with the

efficient operation of market culture. The result, according to Ambrosio (2013), was a free-market system of education that required increasingly standardized curricula and assessment to compare and rank schools, and provide parent-consumers with information needed to make decisions within the educational marketplace. This convergence of different political agendas signaled the move toward the privatization of education and required that states decentralize the operation of public schools while simultaneously centralizing control over curricula, pedagogy, and assessment (Ambrosio, 2013). Apple (2006) described the hegemonic block that spearheaded such reform as being brought to fruition by the efforts of people and organizations committed to a neoliberal market-based education that catered to the interests of neoconservatives, religious fundamentalists, and managerial professionals.

According to Henry Giroux (2013), neoliberalism is not merely an economic doctrine that prioritizes buying and selling; it defines the obligations of citizenship in strictly consumerist terms. He argues that as a defining political feature, neoliberalism has adopted education to win consent and produce consumer-based notions of agency, while instrumentalizing all forms of knowledge (Giroux, 2013). As Ken Saltman (2010), Diane Ravitch (2010), and others have pointed out, the United States has been and still is moving toward financing educational reforms that promote privatization, prescription, and high-stakes testing, while impugning the character and autonomy of teachers and the unions that support them. This neoliberal logic has transformed education from a public good into a privately obtained consumer product. The consequences of this phenomenon to the public education system and, in particular, teacher labor, are both numerous and detrimental.

Teaching and Neoliberal Accountability

Systems of accountability and competition have been essential to the neoliberal project's aim to create markets, define what counts as knowledge and success, as well as to discipline teachers, students, and schools when they fail to reach prescribed goals (Ball, 2007). Instead of talking about the relationship between schools and knowledgeable and engaged citizens, the new educational reformers call for disinvestment in public schools, militarization of school culture, commodification of knowledge, and privatizing both the learning process and the spaces in which it takes place (Giroux, 2013). Pauline Lipman (2013) noted that the impact of neoliberal accountability schemes within education has been that teaching has been reduced to training and pedagogical concepts are substituted with simplistic instrumental methods.

Lipman (2013) further explained that instead of learning to raise questions about the principles underlying different classroom materials, research techniques, or theories of education, teachers are often preoccupied with learning the "how to," what supposedly works, or with mastering the best way to teach prescriptive and usually fragmented forms of knowledge. As such, knowledge is broken down into discrete parts, standardized for easier management and consumption, and measured through predefined forms of assessment. Rather than student-centered pedagogies, neoliberal curricular approaches of this sort are centered on management strategies because the central questions regarding teaching and learning are reduced to the problems of management, regulation, and control (Lipman, 2013). Simply put, neoliberal educational reforms have defined quality teaching through reductive mathematical formulations, while both teachers and students have become dehumanized as mere obstacles impeding progress and success (Giroux, 2013).

No Child Left Behind

Neoliberal reformers of the last two decades have, in particular, set their eyes on the control of schooling in this country. In fact, Marta Baltadano (2012) described No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as the culmination of 20 years of attacks against public education and one of the most important achievements of neoliberalism. Susan Fuhrman and Martin Lazerson (2005) noted that not since *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) likened the country's "rising tide of mediocrity" to an invasion by a foreign power have such emotional rhetoric and "sensational metaphors" (p. xxvii) been used to describe a federal education reform. They highlighted how the 2002 NCLB language, like *A Nation at Risk*, makes a clear connection between education and the economy and, also like its predecessor, the connection sparked intense reactions (2005). Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle (2014) have also noted that the logic in Secretary of Education Rod Paige's 2001 remarks and throughout the NCLB rhetoric is clear: the "output" of excellent teaching is understood as raised scores on high-stakes tests, which will allow students—the "products" of that teaching—to take their rightful (and needed) place in a strong, competitive workforce.

Moreover, Rod Paige (2001) argued that the effort to improve educational outcomes was about producing the labor force America needed. "We need to prepare our children for the work force of the 21st century" (p. 942). Paige (2001) further asserted that schools must be held accountable and school success must be measured by performance, "[by] outputs, not by inputs" (p. 942). He even went so far as to make the direct connection between education and other American business models in saying, "Every publicly traded company in this country reports results to its investors every quarter. Is it asking too much for our schools to report annually on

their results?" (p. 943). Margaret Spellings, Secretary of Education after Paige, also pointed repeatedly to the intimate connection between education and the economy (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2014). It is clear that throughout the text of the NCLB law and its accompanying rhetoric, the improvement of educational outcomes is directly and consistently linked to global competitiveness (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2014). Baltadano (2012) further noted that the logic and language with which neoliberalism painted education as detrimental and flawed caused Americans to lose confidence in the institution of public schooling and, in response, make drastic changes to education through initiatives like NCLB.

NCLB set out with the goal to "ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002, p. 15). In order to accomplish this, NCLB (2002) stated:

> Schools shall demonstrate, based on academic assessments described in paragraph (3), and in accordance with this paragraph, what constitutes adequate yearly progress of the State, and of all public elementary schools, secondary schools, and local educational agencies in the State, toward enabling all public elementary school and secondary school students to meet the State's student academic achievement standards, while working toward the goal of narrowing the achievement gaps in the State, local educational agencies, and schools. (p. 22)

However, rather than leaving educators to figure out how to best comply with the law and build their environments to meet this goal, NCLB's 600-plus-page legislation gave a painstakingly thorough prescription of what teachers and administrators would have to do in order to meet conditions of success.

Furthermore, beyond dictating the guidelines for what constituted proper education, Sec. 2141. Technical Assistance and Accountability in "Subpart 4-Accoutability" (NCLB, 2002, p.

210) detailed the ramifications for teachers, administrators, and schools who were unable to meet the numerous requirements laid out by the new law:

> (c) ACCOUNTABILITY.—After the third year of the plan described in section 1119(a)(2), if the State educational agency determines, based on the reports described in section 1119(b)(1), that the local educational agency has failed to make progress toward meeting the annual measurable objectives described in section 1119(a)(2), and has failed to make adequate yearly progress as described under section 1111(b)(2)(B), for 3 consecutive years, the State educational agency shall enter into an agreement with such local educational agency on the use of that agency's funds under this part . . . . . (p. 211)

The law continued to describe how the state was supposed to make an unsuccessful school successful, once it had been taken over.

In the entirety of NCLB, which was created to define what successful education was, there are over 625 sections, many with their own subsections, detailing what education should look like. Furthermore, the fact that some form of the word "accountable" appears over one hundred times in connection with the hundreds of mandates leaves little question about the micromanaging and overbearing nature of the law (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2014).

One of the side effects of micromanaging nature of NCLB was that teachers, who had little to no input in its creation, became workers who were tasked with carrying out mandates set by others (Bracey, 2004). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2014) have claimed that NCLB's legacy is that it has fundamentally altered the way the American public thinks about teachers and teaching. They pointed out that the neoliberal agenda hidden within NCLB has caused diverse stakeholders in education to regard teachers as technicians, student learning as performance on tests, and teacher learning as frontal training and retraining on what works (2014). They asserted that NCLB was pervasive and strategic in its logic—using simple, direct language and relentless repetition to present an impermeable logic about how to fix the schools by fixing teachers and

teaching (2014). An example of this claim can be found in the increasing pressure to measure teacher success and teacher ability to raise student achievement as "a shift toward a culture of achievement" (Spellings, 2005). According to Gerald Bracy (2004), policymaking in context to NCLB became a process of policy making by use of overly simplistic logic and catchphrases. He noted that NCLB sold the idea that as long as teachers are "clear," "precise," and "consistent" about their teaching and paid proper regard to "missions," "goals," "operational procedures," "outcomes," and "measurement," education would be fixed.

The result of the scripted curricula and high-stakes testing that have been cemented into place through NCLB is a dramatic alteration to the face of teaching as a profession (Fuhrman & Lazerson, 2005). Using marketplace, military, and business concepts of alignment and the reduction of variation in order to ensure success, NCLB's, and subsequently Race to the Top's (RTTT), profound narrowing of the concept of teaching has severely affected teachers and student learning (Cochran-Smith & Lylte, 2014). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2014) noted that NCLB crowded out many important subjects, limits teachers' repertoires, and actually diminished the likelihood that teachers would fulfill their commitments to teaching for a truly knowledgeable, well-informed, caring, and productive citizenry. They have further described NCLB as a set of mandates and definitions coupled with explicit accountability procedures and penalties, which are overtaking practice and policy related to virtually every aspect of teaching: recruitment, preparation, certification, induction, licensure, assessment, professional development, school and curricular change, and all sorts of education research related to teachers and teaching. This assault opens up every aspect of teaching to business-oriented models in order to fix these so-called problems, and the consumerist spirit of neoliberalism has been quick to

jump on the bandwagon, producing and selling market solution answers to these identified problems (Apple, 2006) and, in doing so, wrestling control from educators.

It is very telling that NCLB and its accompanying documents and websites do not use the term "professional practice" to refer to what teachers do (Bracey, 2004). NCLB has a transparent image of teacher learning and teacher development, but it is one that is referred to by many scholars as "training" rather than learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2014). While NCLB clearly indicates that it is teachers who make the difference, it is only so when teaching conforms to neoliberal images of good teaching, which have been made explicit and implicit in the NCLB framework (Bracey, 2004). In short, NCLB and its supporting documents have consistently portrayed good teachers as consumers of products, implementers of research-based programs, faithful users of test data, transmitters of knowledge and skills, and remediators of student weaknesses (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2014).

NCLB's perspective on teaching as raising scores on high-stakes tests by using "scientifically certified knowledge" has been roundly critiqued from many quarters, including classroom teachers and educators who work closely with teachers (Bracey, 2004; Meier &Wood, 2004). These educators have highlighted that the idea that teachers and other educators have the capacity to generate local knowledge of practice, through their own classroom and school inquiries, were antithetical to the premises of NCLB (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2014). Apple (2006) noted that in this era of accountability, the exhortation of scientifically driven decisions has been proclaimed the one and only way to generate knowledge about teaching, while local knowledge is more likely to be regarded as an anecdote or fad than as a legitimate way of knowing about schools and classrooms.

Mathematical utility has now replaced critical dialogue, debate, risk taking, the power of imaginative leaps, and learning for the sake of learning (Giroux, 2013). More specifically, the narrowing of curricula choices to a back-to-basics format and the introduction of lock-step, time-on-task pedagogies operate from the theoretically erroneous assumption that all students can learn from the same materials, classroom instructional techniques, and modes of evaluation (Ingersoll, 2003). These attempts to further deskill teaching by scripting the curriculum and standardized tests continue to ensure that spots will be available for the teachers produced by the growing number of teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2014). In other words, the standardization of teaching means that teachers coming out of teaching programs will be prepared to teach in any environment.

Lipman (2013) has noted that both teacher training and professional development have become "product implementation" aligned with standards and standardized tests and are increasingly conducted by those employed by the testing companies and publishers who produce and sell materials that are promoted by the government. Giroux (2013) added that past and current reforms display little confidence in the ability of public school teachers to provide intellectual and moral leadership for our youth. He pointed out that when teachers are considered in the education debate, they become objects of educational reforms that reduce them to the status of high-level technicians carrying out orders and objectives decided by experts far removed from the everyday realities of classroom life.

The result is that teaching has become a job, not a profession. Teachers are present to carry out the will of others in the manner that others have set. What is happening in public schools today has served to drive many good people out of teaching who are not willing to put up

with the continued erosion of the dignity of public school teaching that is associated with these changes and actively undermines the goal of improving the quality of learning for all students (Ingersoll, 2003). Unfortunately, it appears that teachers have become easily replaceable technicians in the eyes of many policy makers. Apple (2006) commented that the rhetoric found in policies like NCLB and the upcoming Common Core continue to speak to the American neoliberal mindset that commodifies both education and educators while acting to obscure the detrimental effects that erode the quality of education.

Many have written compelling critiques of the current educational agenda surrounding privatization and the redefinition of the uses of education in terms of national priorities construed in market terms (Acker, 1996; Apple, 2006; Molner, 2001). Ingersoll (2003) argued that the data from research certainly suggests that many top-down school reforms betray a deep lack of understanding of teachers' work and the way schools actually operate. Indeed, rather than defining teaching as accountability for student scores on high-stakes tests, teaching requires a much more complex and deeper understanding of what it means to be educated (Giroux, 2009).

With the implementation of Common Core State Standards beginning in 2014, one must ask whether American public education is headed in the right direction or if it is still in the same place. Or does it just have a new look and different name? It seems the latter is true. The tactics and the corresponding rhetoric may have changed in the way they are articulated, but the objectives of achieving metrics, progress, and accountability remain at the center of discussion. The old model (NCLB) did not work so a new one (Common Core) has been created; however, the goal remains the same. And the same forces that thrived off of "helping" education reach NCLB's goals are now standing by to reap the untapped rewards as the new look of education

gets ready for its next pursuit. Unfortunately, this seemingly new endeavor will be motivated by the same dogmatic pursuit of metrics laid out by those who claim to know best. And there is no question that the forces that claimed to know how to reach the metrics laid out by NCLB are ready to profiteer once again through selling methods, curriculum, and consultation in order to "help" schools reach the new goals. And, in that way, nothing has changed. As long as the neoliberal attitude continues to commodify and sell what it means to educate and be educated, the teaching profession and, more importantly, the purpose of education are in danger of continued degradation.

The Effects of Deskilling the Teaching Profession

According to Mark Morgan, Larry Ludlow, Karl Kitching, Michael O'Leary, and Aleisha Clarke (2010), existing literature goes to great lengths in documenting why people enter teaching as well as factors that are important to satisfaction and retention. Veronica Shipp (1999) specified that evidence from the United States indicates that teachers enter teaching for reasons having to do with the intrinsic nature of the work: including making a difference, doing work they will enjoy, and enhancing the lives of children. Margaret Spear, Katy Gould, and Barbara Lee (2000) found that job satisfaction and working with children were among the most important reasons for entering teaching while the least important were holidays, working hours, salaries, and security. Michael Fullan (1993) noted that while many teachers enter the profession of teaching to make a difference in the lives of students, they find that the profession is full of issues that prove to be major impediments in their ability to realize their educational goals.

Studies have found that half of all urban teachers in the United States leave the profession within their first three to five years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Even more

startling, a recent study from the New Teacher Project (NTP) indicated that half of the most effective teachers chose to leave the profession within the first five years (The New Teacher Project, 2012). This may be due to the fact that teachers enter schools with the hopes of teaching but come to experience schools as bureaucratic machines with seemingly endless policies, procedures, and constraints (Barmby, 2006). These conditions result in low job satisfaction that has been associated with stress, burnout, lack of institutional commitment, absenteeism, and high teacher turnover (Culver, Wolfle, & Cross, 1990**).** The scholarly literature has confirmed that teachers carry tremendously heavy workloads under strenuous conditions and do so while receiving inadequate support from administration and society at large (Bubb & Earley, 2004). Failure to retain effective teachers is not only costing our school systems billions of dollars, but also has a negative impact on the student population (Teoh & Coggins, 2013).

As educational leaders work to address the myriad issues that arise from such a harsh working environment, it is important to note that there may be a connecting force driving these problems. Through examining the factors that have led to teacher burnout, attrition rates, and general dissatisfaction, one can argue that the underlying issue is that the teaching profession oppresses and alienates teachers. That teachers are faced with the concept of industrial productivity, the organizational pressures to achieve high standards, continuous innovation force, testing tools, success indicators, and sanctions means that their profession is more focused on meeting statistics than on the human values that motivated them to enter the field of education in the first place (Holland, 2004). Research from Jeffery Brooks, Roxanne Hughes, and Melanie Brooks (2008) suggested that a sense of teachers' alienation is heightened, rather than diminished, by many types of school reforms and that this sense of alienation intensifies and

prompts them to disengage and often leave the profession. Thus, the profession of teaching has become an institution that does not genuinely support or allow teachers to practice their vocation—namely, teaching.

Statement of Problem

Teaching has become, then, an occupation highly focused on bureaucratic notions of accountability, which places extraordinary demands on teachers intellectually, emotionally, and physically (Sachs, 2003). It is also practiced in an atmosphere that is intensive and unrelenting. Teaching is often a stressful occupation, with demands coming from state and district levels, site-level administration, students, parents, and even the intrinsic demands placed on themselves (Greenglass & Burke, 2003). And, within the neoliberal context of accountability, the educational system appears to be demanding more and more from its workers. According to Judyth Sachs (2003), these extra duties include curriculum design and development, school planning, marketing, community relations, information technology, workplace health and safety, resource management, student welfare, and supervision. While the demands upon teachers have increased, there has been little change in patterns of employment, teaching supports, financial compensation, or career advancement (Kelly, 2008).

The need to combat the stressful conditions teachers face is of paramount concern, as oppressive workplace conditions, as described above, tend to lead to the phenomenon of teacher alienation. Andy Hargreaves (1994) stated that the experiences of alienation hinders teachers from reaching their full potential in their efforts with students, thus preventing them from accessing their creativity and engaging in collaborative work. Although some schools are able to create positive environments for teachers to enact their practice, most schools are better

described as closed systems, with little work-related dialogue or interaction between teachers and administration (Goodlad, 1983). Moreover, Jonathan Templin (1988) noted that when faculty work in isolation (as is also the case for most teachers), a system of alienation is highly likely to be a part of that culture.

However, teacher alienation is not inevitable; teachers in good schools, where there is an open system of communication in place among staff and a strong sense of collegiality, have expressed experiencing lower levels of stress and higher levels of commitment and job satisfaction (Kyriacou, 2001). While satisfaction and motivation can be influenced by teacher interactions with colleagues, they may also be influenced by the cultural environment and values within an organization and the educational system (Yetim & Yetim, 2006). Thus, the goal of bringing educators together in a collegial manner may not be enough to overcome the oppressive and alienating factors that have come to define much of the profession. Indeed, it may be necessary to directly address the cultural norms of the educational work environment that have led to a sense of alienation among many teachers as a precursor to engendering genuine satisfaction, commitment, and motivation.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do teachers identify their teaching environment as isolating or alienating?
2. What are ways that teachers believe their environments could be altered to combat or mitigate conditions of isolation or alienation?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand, from the vantage point of teachers, how it is that the educational system causes a sense of dissatisfaction, disempowerment, or disengagement among the teaching workforce. While many educational organizations search for ways to empower both students and staff, it may be the case that any attempt to empower will be hindered by the oppressive nature of commonplace educational practices. In other words, the progressive and innovative practices that are supposed to move education forward will continue to be ineffective until those conditions of teacher labor that hold educators back are addressed and resolved. For the scope of this research, those conditions include any oppressive aspects of teaching labor that result in a sense of alienation or disconnection among teachers. Furthermore, this study will attempt to ascertain how teachers, if given the opportunity, would augment or transform their environments in order to combat or mitigate the alienating conditions they identify within their workplace.

Identifying alienating conditions within the teaching environment and information about ways that such conditions could be altered could engender new discussions about how future educational policy, procedures, and decisions concerning general working conditions affect overall teacher empowerment, agency, and work related well-being.

Significance and Implications for Social Justice

The significance of this study and the social justice implications are numerous. This study, while analyzing and discussing teacher alienation, is also about empowerment. The educational system has found itself in a situation where too many young teachers who initially begin their career with enthusiasm and positive expectations are now looking for a change in

direction after only three to five years in the teaching workforce (Hicks, 2003), while experienced teachers suffering from low morale are retiring early or leaving the profession to seek other employment (O'Donnell, 2001). The underlying purpose of this study is to identify the oppressive aspects of teaching that isolate, marginalize, alienate, and ultimately cause teachers to lose their original passion for teaching. If it is true that many educators have entered teaching "to make a difference . . . to change the world or . . . improve the human condition" (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 374), then it stands to reason that educators would naturally look for the best methods to reach that end. Instead, the high rates of teacher attrition and the subsequent consequences of this phenomenon speak to the many unresolved problems of teacher alienation. This study reconceptualizes the way in which problems of teacher alienation are identified and understood so that they can be addressed in ways that can potentially produce the teacher empowerment that so many organizations seek to create.

This study, moreover, examined how to create an environment that supports teacher empowerment through conditions that support participants to “reflect upon [themselves], know [themselves] as a presence, that can intervene, can transform, can speak of what it does, but can also take stock of, compare, evaluate, give value to, decide, break with and dream” (Freire, 1998a, p. 26). In the spirit of Paulo Freire (1970, 1998a, 1998b), this study engaged teachers as an oppressed group. Through the interview process, teachers were challenged to reconceptualize their labor environment and asked to identify those conditions that they believed disempower their abilities to be creative, imaginative, and epistemologically curious in the process of their teaching practice. Through this process, teachers found and developed their voice as advocates for themselves and each other as they fight to regain control of their passion and profession.

Theoretical Framework

This research has its theoretical foundations in conceptual frameworks of alienation (Seeman, 1959) and of empowerment (Freire, 1970). As both frameworks will be more fully analyzed and discussed in Chapter 2, only a brief summary of the two major concepts that drive this study is provided here.

Alienation. This study will identify those practices that cause teachers to experience a sense of alienation or isolation by examining forms of peer interaction, administration, and organizational cultures that cause teachers to withdraw or dissociate themselves from the confining conditions of teaching practice. The conceptual framework developed by Melvin Seeman (1959) discussed factors that led individuals to become alienated within social environments. His framework identified five distinct subconstructs: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement (Seeman, 1959). A detailed discussion will take place in Chapter 2 surrounding each of these subconstructs as well as the practices and conditions associated with their manifestation.

Empowerment. Paulo Freire (1970) stated that, "Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence; to alienate humans from their own decision making is to change them into objects" (p. 73). In this spirit, this study looks toward teachers becoming the primary subjects of their own empowerment. This is a critical differentiation from many current methods in the educational field where people try to empower others. This research attempted to address the fact that teacher empowerment must begin and end with the teachers; "The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for

their redemption" (p. 54). In the current state of educational practice, this process of self-empowerment is often being denied.

The question of empowerment is particularly significant to this study. Giroux (1988) has described how there is an assumption in education that teachers must be controlled and made to be as consistent and predictable as possible. As curriculum and structures become "teacher proofed" (Apple, 1995), teachers become instruments whose sole purpose is to carry out predetermined content. Giroux (1988) noted that the underlying thought process behind this form of control is that teachers cannot be trusted to carry out their jobs. Hence, "The message appears to be that teachers do not count when it comes to critically examining the nature and process of educational reform" (Giroux, 1988, p. 121).

This study provides data to counteract the oppressive nature of teachers' working environments. By accessing voice from teacher narratives, the emancipatory knowledge can help deconstruct working conditions that have been created by those with power and privilege (Darder, 2002; McLaren, 1989) within the educational environment. Through the use of interviews and narratives, teachers will actualize their capacity for integrating their thoughts and practice in order to become reflective practitioners (Giroux, 1988) within their work environment.

Methodology

The methodology for this study was a qualitative interview process involving six teachers from a variety of educational settings.

Participants

Participants for this study included six teachers from a various school sites. The teachers selected to participate in the interviews were also from a variety of experience levels in order to compare how alienation and isolation were perceived as a teacher progressed in his or her tenure. However, all teachers had a minimum of five years of classroom experience. Teachers varied in content area, school setting, age, and gender in order to take into account how such factors may influence feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction. Potential participants were selected by way of purposeful sampling, as explained further in the methodology chapter.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred through a two-part individual interview process with each participant. I interviewed six participants about their experiences with practices considered to be alienating within their labor as educators. Answers were coded to show trends among the teachers as well as connections to the experiences of alienation and empowerment—as defined through use of two major frameworks. As part of the interview process, teachers were asked to discuss ways in which they might make changes to their environment, in order to mitigate the effects of alienation and isolation. Responses were coded to show similarities between teachers as well as used to discuss the possibilities of utilizing the data to make practical changes within an educational environment.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study focused on a group of six teachers working in a variety of educational settings. Their answers not only reflect education as an institution but also reflect the practices, culture, and environments of their individual schools. While some of the answers may seem

generalizable, it must be noted that none of the questions, topics, or experiences occurred independently. This is to say that responses from their unique contexts were considered with respect to their relationship to a larger educational system, which included but was not limited to organizational culture, individual perspectives, and unique teaching environments.

The methods of data collection required eliciting personal opinions and perceptions from individual teacher participants. As such, the data were personalized and perceptions reflect the reality of a particular situation. The participant pool also varied in a number of ways and their expressed views were reflective of interconnected variables that shaped the environments in which they worked.

Bias

I have been a classroom teacher for 11 years. As such, I have also experienced feelings of dissatisfaction and alienation. These experiences helped shape subsequent questions during the interview to elicit more detailed information surrounding conditions of dissatisfaction. Furthermore, in Chapter 5 of the dissertation, I paralleled my experiences with those shared by the teachers to help inform, analyze, and draw conclusions about the role that alienation played within the working environment.

Summary

This study began with the premise that the teaching environment is incredibly harsh and alienating for many teachers. The effects can be seen in attrition rates, dissatisfaction, burn out, and isolation. While these issues seem to be separate in nature, the fact that they are felt by many teachers across a variety of educational environments and contexts seems to point to the possibility that there is likely commonality. To better understand this link may require a new way

of conceptualizing the teaching environment and the nature of teaching practices. If isolation and alienation are indeed present, the corresponding theories of how to combat their negative effects, in conjunction with the voices of teachers who are contending with the realities of such practices in their everyday life, may yield innovative ways of approaching detrimental educational issues.

Organization

In addition to this introduction, this study includes five more chapters. Chapter 2 presents a detailed discussion surrounding the primary topics that are being researched. These topics include an in-depth analysis of teacher alienation, isolation, and empowerment.

Chapter 3 details the methodology of the project. Description of the participants and the rationale utilized for selection criteria is given. There is a discussion of the interview process, why questions were chosen, how they align with the conceptual frameworks, and how the interviews took place

Chapter 4 details the narratives from each of the interviews. Each of the participants' answers about a variety of conditions of dissatisfaction is presented.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis and discussion of the study. The claims or findings for the study are based upon the data collected and literature presented in chapter two. Chapter 5 also discusses how the presence of alienation signals the possibility to using tenets of empowerment to combat identified alienating conditions.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the study and posits specific implications and recommendations related to the claims discussed in Chapter 5. This discussion also reflects on the possibility and practicality for change based on the data, as well as provides specific recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the two major conceptual frameworks—alienation and empowerment—used when analyzing the data from the interviews. Furthermore, Chapter 2 includes a summary of the scholarly literature surrounding the concept of teacher dissatisfaction and its consequences for the educational system.

The Concept of Alienation

The concept of alienation can be broken into two distinct categories. The first is heavily influenced by Melvin Seeman's (1959) theory of alienation, which adheres to Marxist sociological principles. This view of alienation treats it as a response to historical and social stimuli. Unlike traditional psychological views that see alienation as a psychological construct and unavoidable part of the human condition (Mann, 2001), Seeman's perspective focuses on how it is a human construct. This form of alienation was used in this study for two main reasons. First, the purpose of the research was to identify and suggest ways to overcome alienation in the educational work environment of teachers. Seeman's (1959) theory, which focuses on social stimuli as the cause of alienation, allows for the possibility of reducing the alienating effects by addressing the root social causes. Second, as empowerment is also a conceptual framework through which I addressed teacher alienation, it was necessary to utilize a theory of alienation that can align with a theory of empowerment. The research on empowerment, which will be discussed after alienation, follows Paulo Freire's (1970) conceptualization. Like Seeman's (1959) thoughts on alienation, Freire's (1970) conceptualization states that oppression "is the fruit of an historical and sociological situation, not an essential characteristic of a people's behavior" (p.

61). Both theories view social forces as the root of their respective frameworks. This similarity means that they follow similar paths as they discuss creation, perpetuation, and effects as they pertained to a given context. Thus, their similarities make their co-application to teacher working conditions feasible and, even more importantly, create a dialectical relationship that can help increase understanding and even hint at possible solutions.

Foundations of Alienation

Alienation may be defined from various points of view: as a disconnection in a desired or expected relationship (Case, 2008), the distrust being felt by the individual toward other people and society (Mann, 2001), or the feelings of powerlessness, senselessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement being implanted in the individual due to social, institutional, or interpersonal problems (Seeman, 1959). The result of these feelings create a situation where a person begins to feel a disconnection from him or herself at the personal level, from his or her work, and from the social environment at both the conscious and unconscious level (Tolan, 1981).

Conceptualizing alienation in modern society is not a difficult task (Henning, 2013). According to Karl Marx (1844), alienation results from a single stance that is forced upon us by capitalist societies, a stance that simultaneously leads to alienation from ourselves and others, from our products as useful for human purposes, and finally, from our nature as humans. Such results stem from the fact that a capitalist market depends on people to treat only their own interests in pursuit of maximizing profits; such self-service is the foundational motive in determining their actions (Marx, 1844). Marx's (1844) implication is that by being systematically blind to certain kinds of reasoning that do not maximize self-profit (i.e., morals, ethics,

compassion, etc.), important aspects of human life are lost. According to Tim Henning (2013), when people use only personal gain as a reason to act, they fail to acknowledge the needs of others as a valid or worthwhile reason in and of itself. He noted that this is a failure to treat others as human beings and denies the ability of people to engage each other as caring beings (2013). In other words, a capitalistic society, which in modern times has morphed into its hyper version of neoliberalism, promotes the dehumanization of people in favor of self-gain and, as people become emotionally separated from each other, alienation sets in.

Steven Vogel (1996) noted an important characteristic in creating and perpetuating alienation. Similar to Marx (1944), Vogel (1996) described how alienation could take the form of a failure to recognize the human-created characteristics of an environment. Because so much of a social setting is the product of human design, overcoming alienation would often require people to discern between the seemingly fatalistic aspects of that environment and those which are, in reality, historical constructs (Vogel, 1996). In a similar vein, Henning (2013) noted that alienation could be found where things and people are too quickly considered or placed in preconceived and conditioned categories. Henning's (2013) implication may point to the necessity of confronting the perceived world with a new conceptual lens in order to overcome alienation.

For Seeman (1972), the presence of alienation in the workplace has serious consequences. He noted that extended participation in unfulfilling work would, in fact, spill into to the social aspect of people's lives (Seeman, 1959). Thus, the price society pays for an alienated workforce is not simply the denial of personal fulfillment, but also generates trouble in all areas of social life (Henning, 2013). Such problems can manifest themselves in politics, leisure, social

movements, and so forth. Indeed, the disengagement at work encourages loose commitment to the normative order of society in general and the corresponding consequences (Seeman, 1972).

Alienation as Subconstructs

In order to apply the concept of alienation to an educational environment, it is necessary to be able to utilize subconstructs to make clear connections between the conditions and the resulting alienation. The core of the following analysis focuses on the five categories of alienation as defined by Seeman (1959). In the analysis of the data that were collected for this study, information surrounding teacher dissatisfaction were conceptualized as alienating using these five categories.

Powerlessness. According to Seeman (1959) the idea of powerlessness is "the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements, he seeks" (p. 784). Richard Schatcht (1970) noted that human beings are creative by nature and if they work in a system that denies them ownership of the products on which they work, the psychological effects can be detrimental. Both he and Marx (1844) pointed to how a loss of ownership over something that one has worked to create engenders a loss of power over a fundamental aspect of a person's life.

This strand of alienation results from inequitable distribution of power and control within a social system that inevitably leads to corresponding alienating social-psychological effects on members of said system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Darder, 2012; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1989). In this version of alienation, the alienated individual's expectancy for power over events is either at odds with the objective situation of power, the perception of the power distribution against what the individual feels should be the distribution, or the individual's sense of a

discrepancy between his or her expectations for power and his or her desire for power (Seeman, 1959).

Defining powerlessness as "an expectancy" suggests that this strand of alienation is very closely related to the notion of internal versus external control over reinforcements (Rotter, 1954). According to Julian Rotter (1954), reinforcements are defined as the outcomes of our behavior. Reinforcements are assigned either positive or negative value depending on the desirability of the outcome (Rotter, 1954). Alienation stemming from a powerlessness subconstruct refers to the individual's sense of lack of personal control over a reinforcement situation (Seeman, 1959). He noted that a strong control over such reinforcements yielded a person having a strong sense of power over their situation (1959). In contrast, when reinforcing situations are dependent upon external conditions, such as chance, luck, or the manipulation of others, a strong sense of powerlessness will be perceived (Seeman, 1959). In the latter example, reinforcing outcomes are not under the control of those who engage in a system. Rather, they can only be attributed to sources apart from the individual as behaviors are dictated by forces other than a person's own will. Therefore, the outcome can never be credited to the individual, no matter if they are positive or negative. A lack of control over reinforcements signals powerlessness.

When applying the concept of powerlessness to teacher dissatisfaction, I looked for instances in which the dissatisfaction may be attributed to lack of control over reinforcing situations. Alienation stemming from powerlessness was identified when outcomes were heavily controlled or influenced by variables outside of the teacher (e.g., policies, procedures, or protocols mandated by outside power holders). For example, conditions that were identified as

being put in place when the teacher had no part in the creation or decision-making process would fall into this category.

Meaninglessness. Karl Mannheim (1940) argued that as society increasingly organizes its members in order to create the most efficient use from them, there is a parallel decline in the "capacity to act intelligently in a given situation on the basis of one's own insight into the interrelations of events" (p. 59). Seeman (1959) described this lack of insight as how well an individual has a sense of understanding surrounding events in which he or she is engaged. He goes further to say that alienation in the subcontext of meaninglessness occurs when the individual is unclear as to what he or she should believe in a given situation; "When the individual's minimal standards for clarity in decision-making are not met" (1959, p. 786). For Maria Suarez-Mendoza and Pablo Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara (2008), meaninglessness is the perception of employees when their work is not important or worthwhile because it has no value for society, their own clients, or themselves. Mannheim (1940) posited that a lack of clarity surrounding situations creates conditions in which the individual cannot appropriately choose among alternative courses of action due to a lack of information concerning his or her situation. He pointed out that the increase in functional rationality, with its emphasis on specialization and production from workers, makes the option for choice not only irrelevant to overseers, but undesirable as well (1940). The result, according to Christopher Travis (2014), is a person who is confronted by empty, irrelevant choices.

In the case of meaninglessness, the individual's lack of legitimate choice among alternative beliefs or actions creates low "confidence limits" (Seeman, 1959). Expanding on this idea, not only can he or she not choose alternative acts with confidence, but also he or she cannot

predict with confidence the consequences of acting on a given belief. This is a direct connection to the conceptualization of powerlessness as there is a lack of ability to understand or predict the value of reinforcing situations. Samuel Bacharach and Michael Aiken (2001) pointed out that the level of perceived meaninglessness correlates to a lack of normative integration (which will be discussed as the next construct). Seeman (1959) helped distinguish between the first and second subcategories of alienation when he described that the powerlessness subcontext of alienation refers to the sensed ability to have control over outcomes while the meaningless subcontext of alienation refers to how a sensed inability to predict outcomes renders a person incapable of deriving meaning from a situation.

When connecting meaninglessness to teacher dissatisfaction, I considered instances where teachers reported policies, procedures or other factors that were prescribed by power holders and perceived by teachers as having little or no value. For example, if a teacher identified a mandate and shared that he or she believed that it was of little or no value, the condition could be categorized as meaningless.

Normlessness. The third aspect of alienation is anomie, or the breakdown or ineffectiveness of social norms guiding individual conduct (Seeman, 1959). Jòn Bernburg (2002) stated that anomie is the result when the cultural goals of a group of people are beyond that of the institutionalized means. Similarly, Marco Orru (1989) noted that normlessness occurs when the conditions reflect "an inadequacy of means for the fulfillment of society's culturally sanctioned goals" (p.119).

One of the most general functions of a social structure within a group or organization is to provide a basis for predictability and regularity of social behaviors that are supposed to lead to

shared goals and outcomes (Bernburg, 2002). When the set norms fail to help groups reach those goals, people begin to dissociate with the sanctioned structure (Bernburg, 2002). For Thomas Merton (1940), the anomic situation, from the dissociated individual's point of view, may occur when it is perceived that socially unapproved behaviors are required to achieve given goals. Those who employ the anomie version of alienation are chiefly concerned with emphasizing the "means" to reach their goals (Bernberg, 2002). In this subconstruct of alienation, it is possible that individuals perceive both powerlessness and meaninglessness in their situations. In order to regain control of parts of each, they engage in actions outside the norms of their context (Orru, 1989).

Those found in contradiction between the cultural expectations and the social barriers to reach full opportunity are not always aware of the specific structural sources denying them the way to reach their aspirations (Seeman, 1959). But this does not mean they are not aware of a discrepancy. Eventually, those who do find the source of discrepancy in the social structure may become alienated from that structure and become primed to work outside accepted norms (Orru, 1989). However, Seeman (1959) made a critical observation that many who experience normlessness may attribute their difficulties to more mystical and less sociological sources. This is not to say that an individual who can accept that social structures are the sources of failure is protected from the effects of normlessness. On the contrary, knowing that social structures are at work and feeling that there is no recourse can lead to a fatalistic view that engenders a sense of hopelessness as the perception is that any resistance or change would be futile. Erving Goffman (1959) concluded, "By looking at the ways in which individuals can be thrown out of step with

the sociable [structures], perhaps we can learn something about the way in which he or she can become alienated" (p. 59).

When connecting normlessness to teacher dissatisfaction, I sought instances where teachers reported a structural inability to reach desired educational goals. I utilized both organizational goals (AYP, API, etc.) as well as philosophical goals (building leaders, shaping well-rounded young people, etc.) and compared them to the teachers' perceived ability to reach those goals by following set structures to determine if normlessness was present. In other words, if a teacher identified a condition that was in some way impeding his or her ability to reach a goal, it could be labeled normless.

Isolation. Seeman (1959) described the subconstruct of isolation as the situation where people assign low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society. For Diana Biordi and Nicholas Nicholson (2008), social isolation is a voluntary or involuntary loss of place within one's group. This can appear to be paradoxical to the concepts surrounding powerlessness as that subconstruct discusses the notion of individual control over reinforcing situation, thus seeing independence as a positive quality. However, social affiliations provide a sense of personal identity and are an imperative source of self-esteem and motivation (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament1971). Following this thought, Gwynn Nettler (1957) argued that to gauge isolation is to measure the apartness from society as seen in the individual's commitment to accepted culture.

As with the other subconstructs, isolation can manifest itself in behavioral changes. For Seeman (1959), isolation can lead to an adjustment in actions that can appear rebellious in nature. Because isolated individuals find themselves in situations where they perceive to have no

other recourse, they to seek to bring into being new and modified social structures and values (Nettler, 1957). Merton (1949) noted how normlessness creates a perception of ineffective social structures leading to anomie and, ultimately, isolation. For Merton (1949), isolation can engender outside-of-the-box adaptations that individuals may make to a situation in which goals and means are not well coordinated. Whether these new practices are deemed acceptable or unacceptable is relative to the individual's situation. However, it must be noted that isolation does not necessarily create innovation; it may well be the case that isolation, like normlessness, is accepted as a fatalistic part of an environment and therefore a condition that individuals are relegated to.

When connecting isolation to teacher dissatisfaction, I looked for instances where teachers reported feelings or an intentional disconnection from peers, administration, values, or practices due to structural and cultural norms of the educational environment. For example, if a teacher shared how he or she chose to replace an ineffective sanctioned condition with his or her own individualized structure to better achieve desired goals, it could be labeled as isolation.

Self-estrangement. According to James Bugental (1965), "Estrangement is the experience of being imprisoned in glass, seeing the world in which others move but forever blocked from joining them, pantomiming communication but never really speaking with another person" (p. 311). Michael Rose (1988) expanded on this idea as he believed that estrangement occurs when work and the environment are not an integral part of man as a social being, but rather a self-perceived means to other ends. Blake Ashforth and Ronald Humphrey (1993) spoke to this subconstruct as the situation wherein the individual loses touch with the authentic self and

perceives that he or she is acting contrary to his or her understanding of his or her central, valued, and salient self.

In essence, self-estrangement is the inability of the individual to find self-rewarding activities that engage him or her within his or her situation. For Seeman (1959), this is the result of conditions that cause someone to feel less than one might ideally be, if the circumstances in a situation were otherwise different. He referred to an aspect generally characterized as the loss of intrinsic meaning or pride in work but continues to do so out of necessity. David Riesman (1950) described this as a condition when "nothing in his character, no possession he owns, no inheritance of name or talent, no work he has done, is valued for itself, but only for its effect on others. . ." (p. 49). Seeman (1959) presented examples of such self-estrangement in "the worker who works merely for his salary, the housewife who cooks simply to get it over with, or the other-directed types" who act solely for the purpose of completing the act (p. 790). Manuel Caoili (1984) expanded this by noting that the repetitive tasks characteristic of the modem sense of productive activity practically reduces men and women to a living extension of the social machine. Thus, self-estrangement is the loss of self that is reflected in the culmination of the other subconstructs.

When connecting self-estrangement to teacher dissatisfaction, I engaged instances where teachers reported completing tasks for the sake of completing tasks. However unlike meaningless, self-estrangement was discussed in terms of how the culmination of these types of tasks affected participants' views of the teaching profession. For example, if teachers described a condition as impeding their ability to fulfill their teaching or educational philosophy thus making

the condition one that denied them the ability to actualize them as an educator, it could be labeled with self-estrangement.

Empowerment

The core of this section engages Paulo Freire's conceptualization of empowerment. It will address the ways in which empowerment is created and nurtured, as well as how the lack of an empowering environment creates and perpetuates oppression. The goal is to show that while empowerment and alienation may seem like separate concepts, they actually are linked through a dialectical relationship; thence, to discuss one does not mean the absence or negation of the other.

Empowerment, according to Freire (1970), constitutes a person's true vocation. It encompasses an individual's yearning for freedom and justice and also corresponds to actions undertaken to regain lost humanity due to oppression. On the other hand, Freire (1970) considered oppression "the act of dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also. . . . . those who have stolen it, and is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human" (p. 44). For Freire (1970), oppression and alienation exist in a dialectical relationship with empowerment. Oppression, then, is the injustice, exploitation, and violence that deny people the ability to engage in their vocation of empowerment. Darder (2015), writing in *Freire and Education*, has affirmed Freire's concern for the manner in which teacher alienation is inextricably linked to the oppressive conditions of their labor. Peter McLaren (1997) has also noted that oppression's danger and potency lies in its ability to control the totality of life. Thus, as individuals lose control over aspects of their lives, they are disempowered and succumb

to oppression and alienation. Conversely, regaining control over one's life signals an empowering element.

For Freire (1970), individuals empower themselves by taking responsibility for their own learning, by increasing their understanding of the communities in which they live, and by understanding how they as individuals are affected by current and potential policies and structures. As such, “teachers too are implicated in this process as they are stripped of freedom to make decisions regarding curricula, while their pedagogical social agency is pacified” (Darder, 2015, p. 25). In contrast, when equipped with a greater understanding of their conditions and renewed confidence, teachers can develop the ability to create conditions that allow them to self-actualize and support their social agency.

One of the fundamental components of environments that disempower is top-down, power-coercive prescription. Stephen Brooksfield (1993) has noted that oppression that stems from prescription gives people the illusion that they make choices while, in reality, they are locked and stifled by a one-dimensional and predetermined framework. For Freire (1970), prescription occurs as the powerful impose their choice on another. Furthermore, he noted that a consequence of this control lies in the fact that the victims of prescription may eventually conform to the oppressor's vision and outlook, and in doing so, become alienated from their own identity. Of this Freire (1998b) wrote, “Teachers become fearful; they begin to internalize the dominator’s shadow and authoritarian ideology of the administration" (p. 9). In other words, the oppressive nature of prescription not only controls the actions of individuals but can also change the fundamental outlook a person has of himself or herself.

A necessary component of empowerment as it relates to teachers is the need to view them as "free men and women with a special dedication to the values of the intellect and the enhancement of the critical power of the young" (Scheffler, 1968, p. 11). Giroux (1988) has called for teachers to be viewed as a class of intellectuals who are vital to the development of a free society. Thus, it is critical to defend teachers as transformative intellectuals who are capable of melding scholarship, reflection, and practice as they work to educate and empower students.

Unfortunately, the bureaucratic nature of today's society and workplace makes it nearly impossible for a person to pursue his or her personal vocation of controlling his or her reality (Darder 2015; Freire, 1970, 1989a). Rather, bureaucracies force people into roles in the name of efficiency and productivity (McLaren, 1997). For Freire (1970), prescription represents a form of *cultural invasion,* wherein oppressors create reality in their own vision and force the oppressed to adhere to this dominant construction of reality. Freire (1970) noted that the longer the oppressed stay in the prescribed culture, the more likely they are to become alienated from their own culture and values. Slowly, and depending on the strength of the prescription, the individual is worn down to the point of becoming that which the prescribed culture has decreed him or her to be.

According to Herbert Kliebard (2000), US teaching programs adhere to a behaviorist methodology, which focuses on mastering subject areas and best practices that have been decided upon by others. John Dewey (2013) noted that the emphasis in turning teachers into experts who carry out technical expertise is a disservice to teachers, teaching, and students. Giroux (1988) viewed such a system as one that assumes that teacher behavior and thought processes must be controlled. Forced compliance with mandates assures that any schooling

practices squash autonomy in favor of efficiency and predictability. However, it also ignores the importance of the histories, experiences, cultures, and talents that are embodied within teachers (Nieto, 2009).

This highly structured invasion of the individual happens as a result of what Freire (1970) called the *banking concept of education*, which is implemented by the dominant upon the oppressed. The banking model is associated with a process of cultural manipulation, in which "experts" (teachers) deposit information into the minds of "subordinates" (students) who are viewed as receptacles or containers to be filled. In this form of education, the oppressed become forced to learn those concepts that the dominant say should be learned, in that "the dominant class and culture is inscribed in the educational policies and practices that shape hegemonic schooling" (Darder, 2015, p. 10). The oppressed rarely critically evaluate concepts forced upon them but rather believe in their efficacy or truth because the dominants say so (Brooksfield, 1993). Thus, the oppressed are not only forced to assimilate into the culture of the dominant at the expense of their own culture, they are also placed in a position of deference to the dominant's agenda where personal thought, expression, and creativity are inhibited (Freire, 1970). Thus, Freire "theorized that it is precisely these processes of domination that reinforce and give legitimacy to the reproduction of a "banking" system of education" (Darder, 2015, p.10).

After enough time, a disturbing outcome of cultural invasion is what Freire (1970) described as a *fear of freedom*. In this situation, he noted that the oppressed will have deeply internalized the culture of the oppressors and, thus, cease to work in the interest of their own empowerment. The more deeply the oppressed accept the designated role imposed upon them, the more likely they are to attempt to adapt to the world they believe they cannot change. Freire

(1970) stated, "They fatalistically 'accept' their exploitation. . . . [and] are apt to react in a passive and alienated manner when confronted with the necessity to struggle for their freedom and self-affirmation" (p. 64). Indeed, the ambiguity of self in which the oppressed live creates a fear of freedom and makes it unlikely for them to seek the means of their liberation of their own accord (McLaren, 1997). Moreover, Freire considered fear of freedom an effective means for the domestication of teachers, which led to their eventual acquiescence (Darder, 2015). Rather than teachers seeing themselves as creators of their destinies and agents of change, this tacit acceptance of the status quo signals the successful alienation of an individual or groups of people from themselves (Freire, 1970).

The oppressive climate is alienating; it kills the creativity and enthusiasm of the oppressed and engenders environments that are marked by hopelessness and fear of risk taking. Freire (1970) noted that men and women who submit to oppressive conditions become "beings for another" rather than "beings for themselves" and, as a result, are not able to develop in an authentic manner (p. 161). As long as the oppressive nature of the dominant hegemony remains hidden and uncontested, the oppressed will not be able to construct a means to liberate themselves. Only through critical awareness, acknowledgement of an oppressive state, and the belief that all human beings must take a role in the construction of their reality can alienation and oppression be combated and empowerment realized. However, this also entails, from Freire's (1989a) viewpoint, an understanding of oppression as never a finished or absolute phenomenon; it is this *unfinishedness* that provides hope for the transformation of oppression

Tenets of Empowerment

The oppressive nature of alienation requires us to engage its dialectical opposite. Darder (2002) stated:

> In waging the struggle to restore out humanity, it was absolutely imperative to Freire that we recognize that oppression does not exist within a closed world from which there is no exit. Instead. . . it was precisely because oppression is an impermanent and changing historical reality constructed by human beings that we. . . possessed the possibility of transforming it. (p. 54)

As the educational environments of the participants are explored and analyzed using the framework of oppressive subconstructs of alienation, it is also necessary to be mindful of how descriptions of dissatisfying conditions point toward empowering qualities that are missing but have the possibility of being present. In other words, if a teacher's description of his or her work environment shows signs of the subconstruct of isolation, it is not sufficient to label it as such and move on. Rather, it is imperative to understand that isolation is an oppressive trait that works in a dialectical relationship with solidarity. Thus, any experience that can be labeled with the subconstruct of isolation may also be combated by striving to build conditions of solidarity in its place. Through this process, teachers begin the process of identifying and challenging those policies and practices that objectify and dehumanize them (Darder, 2002). With the identification of oppression within the working environment described by the subconstructs of alienation comes the possibility of identifying empowering traits that become the core values that can lead to positive change through empowerment.

The following section describes tenets of empowerment that serve as the dialectical opposite of the subconstructs of alienation and may very well act as the answer about how to

mitigate and end alienating conditions. A detailed description of how each of these tenets works in relationship to their oppressive opposites will be given in Chapter 5.

Voice. Voice provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, which Ladson-Billings and Tate IV (2009) have described as the first step on the road to justice. Being able to speak about one's conditions leads to the realization of how one came to be oppressed and subjugated (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 2009) and through "hearing each other's voices, individual thoughts and associating these voices with personal experience makes us more acutely aware of each other" (hooks, 2009, p. 139). A person's voice is shaped by personal history and distinctive lived engagement with the surrounding culture. The ability to both exercise voice and be heard become necessary requisites to defining oneself as an active participant in the world (Giroux, 2009). In this research, *voice* is described as the dialectical opposite of powerlessness. A more detailed description of this relationship will be given in Chapter 5.

Dialogue. One of the most critical aspects of the empowerment, dialogue constitutes the educational strategy where participants enter with the purpose of both contributing and receiving in the construction of knowledge (Darder, 2012). As Darder (2012) explained:

> Lived experiences cannot be ignored nor relegated to the periphery in the process of coming to know. Instead, they must be actively incorporated as part of the exploration of existing conditions and knowledge, in order to understand how these came to be and to consider how they might be different. (p. 14).

Freire (1970) noted that dialogue is the exercise of critical thinking that generates an understanding of people's objective selves and an awareness of a situation. Described as "the encounter of women and men in the world in order to transform the world" (Freire, 1970, p. 129), dialogue serves as the basis for collaboration. Paula Allman (2001) described dialogue as a

collaborative form of communication and learning that "enables people to grasp the dialectical movements of their reality" (p. 427). Through this collaboration, people's empirical understanding of reality becomes transformed into knowledge that can actively shape that reality (Freire, 1970). In this research, dialogue is the dialectical opposite of meaninglessness. A more detailed description of this relationship will be given in Chapter 5.

Agency. Rogers and Wetzel (2014) defined agency as “the capacity of people to act purposefully and reflectively on their world” (p. 63). Agency is shaped by social interactions and achieved in a given situations depending on conditions (Priestley, Edwards, Miller, & Priestley, 2012). Bandura (2006) highlighted that an emergent property of a given context affects behavior and life choices. He referred to agency as a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in specific situations (Bandura, 1998). Lasky (2005) noted that agency is “mediated by the interaction between the individual (attributes and inclinations) and the tools and structures of a social setting” (p. 900). Dietz and Burns (1992) argued that agency is manifested through intentional actions and agents must have the ability to make choices and to monitor the effects of their agency. Human agency is grounded in the belief that change is possible, which creates a process of empowerment and agency (Bandura, 2006). In this research, agency is described as the dialectical opposite of normlessness. A more detailed description of this relationship will be given in Chapter 5.

Solidarity. Kathleen Skubikowski, Catherine Wright, and Roman Graf (2009) defined solidarity as a social relationship between human actors. They went on to describe how the relationship between individuals who engage in solidarity has moved from the individualistic narrative to the communal narrative that acknowledges a capacity for empathy and shared

belonging (Skubikowski et al., 2009). Freire (1970) affirmed that entering into solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the conditions that have created alienating environments. He noted that one of the most dangerous aspects of oppressive conditions is their ability to "absorb [the oppressed] within [them which] thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness" (Freire, 1970, p. 51). He explained that it is through solidarity with each other that the oppressed can confront reality critically and act upon it. Darder (2002) described the fight against oppression as one that can never be waged in isolation. In this research, solidarity is the dialectical opposite of isolation. A more detailed description of this relationship will be given in Chapter 5.

Praxis. Ira Shor (2009) used the reflexive phrases theorizing practice and practicing theory to describe the concept of practice. Freire (1970) similarly described praxis as a continuous cycle of reflection and action upon the world in order to transform. Freire (1993) highlighted the necessity of both reflection and action and the interdependence on each other in order to have meaning:

> There is no way to reduce one to the other, in a necessary dialectical or contradictory relationship. In itself, inverse in its refusal of theoretical reflection, practice, in spite of its importance, is not sufficient to offer me a knowledge that explains the raison d'être of relations among objects. Practice does not by itself represent a theory of itself. But, without practice, theory runs the risk of wasting time, of diminishing its own validity as well as the possibility of remaking itself. In the final analysis, theory and practice, in their relationship, become necessary as they complement each other. (p. 101)

Darder (2002) noted that through the work of praxis, individuals can work together to formulate well-thought-out critiques and design alternative strategies for changing the nature of labor. She continued, ". . .Talk is not enough. Our talk and our reflections must be accompanied by actions—actions that further inform the continued development of out theoretical

understanding" (p. 85). In this research, praxis is the dialectical opposite of self-estrangement. A more detailed description of this relationship will be given in Chapter 5.

Teacher Dissatisfaction

Teacher job satisfaction refers to a teacher's affective relation to his or her teaching role and is a function of the perceived relationship between what he or she wants from teaching and what one perceives the profession is offering to a teacher (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). Similarly, Nancy Morse (1953) viewed the strength of an individual's "desires, or his/her level of aspiration in a particular area" to be an important factor in job satisfaction (p. 28). Those with the strongest desires or highest aspirations will be least happy with their job, if the environmental conditions do not facilitate satisfaction of their needs.

Although the issue of teacher stress is not new, the current severity and scope of the problem appears unprecedented (Litt & Turk, 2001). Jack Dunham (1976) concluded that teachers experience more stress than ever before. Furthermore, teachers appear to perceive their jobs as more stressful than other comparable professionals (Litt & Turk, 2001), which may partly explain disproportionately high attrition rates among educators (Ingersoll, 2001).

Over the last two decades, many studies have attempted to identify conditions of teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as experienced by elementary and secondary school teachers (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). There is much research that points to a host of variables that predict teachers' job satisfaction, turnover, and general distress, which are potentially modifiable by school systems (Ingersoll, 2003; Litt & Turk, 2001; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). Among these are the role teachers perceive for themselves, the school climate, their coping resources, and various job-specific problems (Ingersoll, 2003). Whereas all of these factors have

been the subjects of research in the past, much of the data have tended to be parochial in nature, often obtained through the use of simple problem identification and thus failing to understand the complexity of conditions surrounding the phenomenon of teacher dissatisfaction (Litt & Turk, 2001).

Instead, current findings suggest that teacher stress should be viewed as a multidimensional construct rather than the one-dimensional view of the past (Litt & Turk, 2001). As R.M. Garrett (1999) has argued:

> The social context of the teachers, the teachers' attitudes and their working conditions are intimately related in a very complex manner and we need to understand them better . . . What we do not have is a very clear picture of what motivates teachers, or indeed, what demotivates them. (p. 2)

Researchers have noted that satisfaction has been a result of different factors, including developing warm, personal relationships with students, the intellectual challenge of teaching, having autonomy and independence, having opportunities to try new ideas, participating in decision-making and reform efforts, developing social relations with colleagues, and having opportunities for occupational growth (Lathan, 1998). Conversely, perceived low social status, low pay, lack of autonomy, and deskilling have all been linked to teacher dissatisfaction (Hargreaves, 1994). However, as stated above, the conditions that engender these perceptions vary from environment to environment as well as individual to individual, making broad statements about what specific conditions create satisfaction or dissatisfaction difficult, if not impossible.

Common Sources of Teacher Dissatisfaction

There is considerable evidence from the United States that teachers enter teaching for reasons to do with the intrinsic nature of the work, including making a difference, doing work

they will enjoy, and enhancing lives of children (Shipp, 1999). Positive experiences for teachers, such as an opportunity to work with children and to nurture student learning (Hargreaves, 1994; McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Swanson-Owens, & Yee, 1986) were reported by teachers as prime influences on job choice and satisfaction. However, teaching is often a stressful occupation with demands from administrators, colleagues, students, and parents compounded by work overload, shifting policies, and a lack of recognition for accomplishments (Greenglass & Burke, 2003).

The outcomes of work-related stress among teachers are serious and may include burnout, depression, poor performance, absenteeism, low levels of job satisfaction, and, eventually, the decision to leave the profession (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). Andy Hargreaves (1994) noted that a variety of studies suggest aspects such as a perceived disconnect between their role as teacher and the reality of their work environment, an overload of work demands, and overall stress to be predictors of job satisfaction. Similarly, he found an inverse relationship between job satisfaction and required demands and duties that teachers felt made little or no impact on the education of students (1994).

Teacher stress, defined as the experience of negative emotions resulting from a teacher's work (Kyriacou, 2001), is inversely related to teacher efficacy and job satisfaction, and positively related to poor teacher–pupil rapport and low levels of teacher effectiveness (Abel & Sewell, 1999). Although qualities like personal characteristics and teacher efficacy play a role in teacher satisfaction, school climate has been identified by the research as perhaps the strongest indicator or source of stress and can influence or amplify the impact that the aforementioned variables may have on teachers (Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007). Data suggest that the roots of teacher dissatisfaction largely lie in the working conditions within schools and districts: salary

was the most cited reason (82%), followed by disruptive students (58%), administrative support (43%), lack of parental involvement (42%), working conditions (38%), lack of professional prestige (31%), personal reasons (30%), and lack of collegiality (19%) (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

However, as stated earlier, it is important to note that teacher stress is not inevitable in challenging conditions; teachers in schools in which there is good communication among staff and a strong sense of collegiality express lower levels of stress, higher levels of commitment, and job satisfaction (Kyriacou, 2001). Teachers who are satisfied with their work typically display higher levels of motivated behavior as well as lower levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout (Greenglass & Burke, 2003). Furthermore, job satisfaction, described as the perceptions of the fulfillment derived from day-to-day activities, is associated with job commitment and with higher levels of performance (Greenglass & Burke, 2003). A key finding noted that employee satisfaction has also been found to be a reliable predictor of retention (Bobbitt, Faupel, & Burns, 1991). Jon Arnold, Cary Cooper, and Ivan Robinson (1998) found that personal satisfaction, along with work related responsibility, are important indicators of a person's psychological well-being, which in turn can act as a predictor of work performance and commitment. In his work, Frederick Herzberg (1966) similarly theorized that job satisfaction was influenced by intrinsic factors related to actual job contentment and by extrinsic factors associated with the work.

Personal control. Many teachers experience schools as bureaucratic machines with seemingly endless policies, procedures, and paperwork (Barmby, 2006). The American education system is experiencing increasing bureaucratic control of testing, content, and pedagogy that systematically limits what teachers can and cannot do in their classrooms (Au,

2010). In this regard, the fact that teachers are faced with the concept of industrial productivity, the organizational pressures to achieve high standards, continuous forced innovation, testing tools, success indicators, and sanctions over teachers are creating high levels of alienation among teachers (Holland, 2004). Such teacher-proofing of curriculum and instruction puts a disturbing twist onto the philosophical purpose of education (Fullan, 1993).

Unfortunately, many teachers are disheartened by their powerlessness to make decisions about their own labor and to take action they would deem necessary due to the demands to reach certain educational metrics (Au, 2010). Any subjective sense of empowerment tied to their initial intrinsic motivation for becoming an educator can never be actualized, in that teachers seldom have the power to make critical decisions or take actions as they see fit. According to Holland (2004), the result is alienation manifested in feelings of negativity toward those people and conditions that limit their social agency (peers, administrators, organizational structures) and dash their hopes for full participation. Teacher dissatisfaction can also be seen in teacher attempts to dissociate themselves from the confining realities (Fullan, 1993).

The ongoing deskilling of teachers generates high levels of stress and anxiety as well as decreasing self-esteem, morale, confidence, and sense of efficacy (Blake et al., 2010). Many teachers enter the education profession to make a difference in the lives of students (Fullan, 1993), but they find the system itself to be a major impediment in their pursuit to do so (Blake et al., 2010). In fact, the high-stakes conditions of education, discussed in the introduction, make educators feel even more inadequate, dispensable, and burnt out (Au, 2010). Stripped of their ability to make a difference and be agents of change, it should be no surprise that high stakes

metrics and the corresponding control exerted over teachers continues to contribute to the escalating departure of teachers from the profession (Crocco & Costigan, 2007).

Colleague interaction. The satisfaction that teachers gain from their work may be experienced individually, but teaching is not practiced in a social or cultural vacuum. Bradley Kirkman and Debra Shapiro (2001) discovered that job satisfaction and job commitment were higher for teachers who worked as a collective because of lower resistance to teamwork and increased willingness to support each other with managerial decisions. Research in teacher collaboration has also demonstrated that when teachers have the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues they were significantly more satisfied with their role as a teacher than those who did not have these collegial experiences (Hargreaves, 1994). It appears then that collegial connections are a conduit to building skills that lead to teacher effectiveness and foster a sense of belongingness needed to promote satisfaction and long-term commitment to teaching (Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001).

Although some schools have what are termed "open climates" characterized by frequent pedagogical exchange between educators (Goodlad, 1983), most schools are better described as closed, with little professional peer dialogue or interaction between teachers and their peers (Templin, 1988). Although new teachers are arguably the most at risk for experiencing social isolation and the most dependent on meaningful collaboration with their colleagues, the secluded nature of working in schools often leads all teachers, regardless of their experience, to work in isolation and struggle privately with problems (Lortie, 1975). Alienation of teachers occurs in schools where staff typically works alone with little colleague contact or support (Goodlad, 1983). Teacher influence in schools rarely extends beyond the walls of their classroom (Templin,

1988). Teachers often describe their work as solitary with few opportunities to reflect on instruction, coteach, or plan lessons with colleagues (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

John Goodlad (1983) described the school workplace as a slow-changing, bureaucratic organization that seldom fosters peer dialogue and growth. He cautioned that this behavior sets a pattern for future actions in that teachers may not learn to work collegially and may resist, even if given the chance. When faculty must work in isolation, they apparently tend not to seek changes in that isolated atmosphere; and thus, it may be said that the system of alienation through isolation may very well perpetuate itself simply by existing without being challenged (Templin, 1988). Isolation from peers and lack of collegial work conditions leads to a slow and haphazard process of spreading pedagogical ideas that lead to little growth or support (Goodlad, 1983; Templin, 1988). Fullan (1993) echoed this when he stated that teacher alienation obstructs them from being role models for students and the society, from improving themselves, from contributing to social development, from their productivity in education service, from their creativity and their collaborative work.

Administrative support. Not surprisingly, administrators' actions have enormous impacts on teacher satisfaction (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kukla-Acevedo, 2009). Lack of administrative support is one of the most frequently cited causes of attrition (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Geoffrey Borman and N. Maritza Dowling (2006) have generally defined administrative support as "the school's effectiveness in assisting teachers with issues such as student discipline, instructional methods, curriculum, and adjusting to the school environment" (p. 380). More specifically, focusing on the role of school leadership, Ken Leithwood and Doris Jantzi (2006) defined effective administrative support as the four dimensions of leadership

practices: building school vision, developing specific goals and priorities, offering individualized support, and developing a collaborative school culture. Supportive administrators have been found to offset the negative effects of a burdensome workload and attrition due to stress, certification status, and workload manageability (Brownell, Smith, McNellis, & Miller, 1997).

Teachers want to work in schools where they have greater autonomy, higher levels of administrative support, and clearly communicated expectations (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Sherri Otto and Mitylene Arnold (2005) found the majority of educators with more than five years of teaching experience perceived their administrators as supportive; whereas teachers who left the profession in less than five years did not perceive that they had support. Lack of administrative support has been characterized as the school leader having competing priorities and being unavailable or inattentive to teacher needs, relying solely on the expertise of teachers instead of providing meaningful and necessary support (Bays & Crockett, 2007). In fact, Susanna Loeb, Linda Darling-Hammond, and John Luczak (2005) used survey data administered to California teachers to reveal that this lack of administrative support was one of the key reasons teachers left the profession. In agreement, Michael Lueken's (2004) study found that nearly 40% of teachers who left teaching cited lack of administrative support as the main reason for their departure.

In examining retention, Susan Wynn et al. (2007) described how principals have a great deal of power and influence, perhaps even more than they realize, when it comes to teachers and the level of support provided within the structure of the school. Salas, Tenorio, Walter, and Weiss (2004) found that the satisfied teachers and administrators managed to negotiate the gap between their ideals of good teaching and how the administrators, tasked with overseeing

bureaucratic practices, could potentially constrain them. In contrast, unresolved conflict between administrative leadership and their subordinates has been identified as another leading obstacle to teacher empowerment and effective school-based management (Marsh, 1994).

Summary

This study contextualizes teacher dissatisfaction as labor conditions that alienate and isolate individuals from their vocation. Furthermore, it determines what changes could be made to the workplace so that feelings of alienation can be replaced by feelings of empowerment. As such, Chapter 2 has discussed the theoretical frameworks of alienation and empowerment. It has also presented research surrounding teacher dissatisfaction. This study, moreover, will examine if teachers perceive alienation due to dissatisfaction, as well identify empowerment values, within their proposed changes.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A Qualitative Methodology

In order to study the phenomenon of teacher alienation and empowerment, I chose to use a qualitative research approach. This study examined conditions that teachers identified as alienating or isolating within the teaching profession; thus it was necessary to interview teachers so that their perceptions could be brought to the forefront of the investigation. The qualitative approach allows for rich discussion surrounding the ways in which dissatisfying labor conditions manifest feelings of alienation. After discussing the concept and subconstructs of alienation in the initial interview, subsequent interviews were conducted that provided opportunities for the teachers in this study to examine and explore their original statements surrounding alienation in the workplace. As a closing to the interview process, I entered into dialogue with participants about potential changes to the work environment that might result in altering conditions of alienation. This discussion touched on practical solutions that could be undertaken at the personal and school-site level, as well as a more philosophical discussion about how to engage systemic change.

Research Questions and Assumptions

This research project was driven by the following questions:

1. In what ways do teachers identify their teaching environment as isolating or alienating?
2. What are ways that teachers believe their environments could be altered to combat or mitigate conditions of isolation or alienation?

The assumption that undergirded this study was that teachers do not necessarily conceptualize their work environment as alienating even though they experience dissatisfaction. However, research surrounding elements of teacher dissatisfaction and the corresponding effects are, in fact, connected to alienation (Seeman, 1959) and have a significant impact on educators. A detailed explanation of how the connection between alienation and dissatisfaction will be given in Chapter 5. Research that helps educators to conceptualize educational practices as potentially alienating is an important step in creating innovative approaches to issues surrounding teacher dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, the goal of this project was not only to provide a space for teachers to identify those alienating forces found within their profession, but also to have them identify ways in which they could begin to resist and change conditions of their labor. Thus, the ideas that the participants generated to combat the alienating conditions are a critical component of the study. The data from this section were utilized to provide recommendations for policies and practices that can transform the teaching environment from one that is alienating to one that is empowering.

Participants

Interview participants (n = 6) were a purposeful sampling from a variety of school settings throughout Los Angeles (see Table 1). The primary attribute for participant selection was past teaching experience. The interviewees were all teachers with at least five years of experience. Their ages ranged from 28 to 38. All six teachers taught at the secondary level. However, their content areas and specializations varied greatly. Beyond experience, I attempted to vary site location, age, and gender to gather as broad of a pool as possible. The goal was to

include as many factors as possible to see if the profession affected people in similar ways regardless of the listed differences. The participant pool was informed about the purpose of the interview via email and assured that all information would remain confidential. Individuals willing to participate were chosen through the use of purposeful sampling based primarily on experience and content area in order to ensure the study gathered data from a variety of perspectives. Participants were also informed that the information they shared could potentially be highly critical of practices and that they could choose to not respond to any of the question(s) if they felt personally or professionally uncomfortable.

Table 1

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Years of Experience	Primary Subject	Type of School
Julie	28	White	F	5	Sp.Ed.	Secondary
Michelle	37	White	F	15	Choir/Music	Secondary
Matt	29	Hispanic	M	5	History	Secondary
Emily	27	Asian	F	5	English	Secondary
Betty	36	White	F	15	Art	Secondary
Ben	33	White	M	9	English	Secondary

Interview Process

The interview process comprised the core of the study. Six interviewees were selected as participants in the hopes that their narratives could be used to identify patterns of alienation within the educational environment. Each participant was interviewed on two separate occasions. The duration of each interview lasted approximately two hours. The purpose of the interviews was to allow teachers to contribute to a body of knowledge surrounding teacher alienation due to labor conditions based on the meanings they found in their personal and working experiences (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews were semistructured. They consisted of a set

of predetermined, open-ended questions (See Appendix 1) as well as questions that emerged from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewees (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

The initial interview broached the topic of dissatisfaction associated with being a teacher. It delved into specific events or ongoing practices that yield frustration on multiple levels. Initial questions were derived from the literature review and probed a number of common issues of dissatisfaction. Participants also were given the freedom to discuss other areas they wished to address beyond the scope of the initial questions.

The experiences shared in the initial interview determined the content of the subsequent interviews. The second interview aimed at discussing the experiences from the first interview in order to determine the effects of those negative experiences and how they have played a role in shaping the interviewee's attitude towards their job. More specifically, the second interview was used to determine if the participants felt that their reported conditions of dissatisfaction engendered feelings that corresponded to Seeman's (1959) subconstructs of alienation. The discussion surrounded how strongly the participants felt the conditions resulted in alienating feelings and how such feelings have altered their perception of the profession.

An important component of the interview process was discussion surrounding the ways in which teachers could begin to combat conditions that create alienating feelings. During this part of the second interview, the discussion focused on possible solutions at the individual, school site, and systemic levels. The goal of this part of the interview was to collect and compare data across the participants to identify commonalities within their responses. These data were used to open a dialogue about necessary criteria for creating empowering teaching environments.

Coding the Data

Data were collected through researcher field notes related to the interview, as well as recordings and transcripts. All participant data were coded to reflect Seeman's (1959) subcategories of alienation and Freire's (1970) notion of empowerment. Seeman's categories, as discussed earlier included the following categories.

Powerlessness. Powerlessness was applied to dissatisfying conditions that caused a lack of control over reinforcing situations. Alienation stemming from powerlessness was identified when outcomes were heavily controlled or influenced by variables outside of the teacher's control (policies, procedures, etc.).

Meaninglessness. Meaninglessness was applied to instances where teachers reported policies, procedures, or other factors that were prescribed by power holders and perceived by teachers as having little or no value.

Normlessness. Normlessness was applied to instances where teachers reported a structural inability to reach desired educational goals. This included organizational goals as well as philosophical goals (e.g., teaching at a high level).

Isolation. Isolation was applied to instances where teachers reported feelings of disconnection from peers, administration, values, or practices due to structural and cultural practices of the working environment. Isolation often occurred as teachers disassociated with limiting conditions

Self-estrangement. Self-estrangement was applied to instances where teachers reported being unable to fulfill the ability to be the teacher that they envisioned. These instances were often limiting conditions that became serious sources of stress and dissatisfaction.

Positionality

Much of the work that went into the interview and analysis of the data has been influenced by my own experiences. I have been a classroom teacher for 11 years and, as I researched the topic, I realized that I had experienced many alienating conditions. These experiences aroused feelings of frustration and anger as I dealt with them. The impact of this realization became the undergirding structure of the dissertation. Understanding if alienating conditions led to similar feelings in other educators and the consequences of alienating feelings became a focus of the research. I often used my own experiences to guide conversations during the interview process when I felt the participants shared feelings or experiences that paralleled my own.

Limitations and Delimitations

As discussed in the introduction, this study not only reflects education as an institution but also reflect the practices, culture, and environments of their individual schools. While some of the responses may seem generalizable, none of the questions, topics, or experiences discussed in interviews arose in a vacuum. This is to say that participant responses were anchored to their own unique contexts and experience and, thus, were considered in concert with their relationship to a larger educational system, which included aspects of organizational culture, individual perspectives, and unique teaching environments, which informed these perspectives. This was an important limitation to note, in that the methods of data collection for this study required eliciting personal opinions and perceptions from individual teacher participants. As such, the data were personalized and perceptions reflect the reality of a particular situation, as described by each

participant. The participant pool also varied in many ways and their responses were reflective of interconnected variables that shaped the environments in which they worked.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Teacher Narratives

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the ways in which teachers identified issues of alienation and isolation within their work environments and ways in which they would consider changing that environment to promote a greater sense of empowerment and well being. Furthermore, the study sought to improve clarity surrounding teacher experiences of frustration in their work environments and how such dissatisfaction coincided with the phenomenon of teacher alienation. An important assumption that drove this study was the belief that a connection between dissatisfaction and alienation could help explain why teachers burnout, resist educational reforms, self-isolate, or choose to leave the profession. Instead of seeing these detrimental responses as a result of seemingly independent factors, this study sought to determine if alienation undergirded all forms of dissatisfaction. If alienation could be detected within the experiences shared by teachers, then a new framework could be created for viewing, discussing, and approaching dissatisfaction within the educational work environment.

The following data focused on the interview responses of six teachers as they discussed their experiences as related to dissatisfying conditions in their workplace. The participants in this study were all teachers with at least five years of experience. Their ages ranged from 28 to 38. All six participants taught at the secondary level. However, the content areas and specializations varied greatly. Two of the teachers taught high school English, one taught history, one taught art, one taught music and choir, and one was a special education teacher. Each of the teachers was given a pseudonym in order to ensure confidentiality.

Initial Interview

Teacher 1 (Julie)

Educational philosophy and beliefs. Julie was a 28-year-old female who was is in her fifth year of teaching as a special education teacher. She had begun her work at a nonpublic school and had switched to her current school at the beginning of the year. It is important to note that Julie was fairly sure she would be attempting to move out of classroom teaching at the end of the school year.

Julie initially entered the teaching profession because of a chance experience she had after she graduated from college:

> When I got out of college and moved back to Los Angeles, my impractical degree did not do anything for me and I knew someone who worked in a nonpublic school. It was a special education school and they needed teacher assistants and so I thought that was awesome, that's a salary and money. I didn't even care because it was great. I felt I could do that.

Although teaching had not been her first choice as a job, working in a special education setting allowed Julie to learn more about the area she was interested in pursuing for the future. More specifically, she saw herself moving into a job that focused on therapy and found that she enjoyed the blend of teaching and therapy that occurred in the special education setting:

> I felt that I was going in that general therapeutic direction at some point. So I thought [this job] is great. So I got there and was a teacher assistant and I really liked it and I really want to take it a little further. I got my credential [and] I just kept working there and that's all I knew of education. I did not know anything of general education other than having been a student. So it was an interesting introduction to being a teacher. Yeah, so I felt really right when I was there. I did not have these dreams or was fantasizing about being a teacher before. But I felt like this was the best job I've ever had and I [was] really connecting with it and it's what I wanted to pursue for the time being.

When asked about what she found rewarding about being a teacher, she discussed how she found pride in helping students grow. For Julie, teaching was about the development of an

individual at the personal level. Her greatest reward came when she saw her students grow on the personal level and hoped that they could recognize and appreciate the part she had played in that growth. Julie described the best part about being a teacher:

> Those rare moments when you see some of the fruits of your labor. . . those moments, which seem very rare nowadays, when there's that sense of acknowledgment of like, "You really helped me, thank you." Or they don't even have to overtly say thank you . . . and those are beautiful moments.

However, Julie also noted that many times the job seemed thankless due to the fact that the growth and maturity were not necessarily noticeable in the moment:

> [Helping develop a person] is such a marathon and . . . you may never see the good of what you've done. Actually, it's possible that you shall never see it and you'll never know. And maybe you have affected someone really positively and they go on years after high school and think fondly of you and that's nice. And I think you have to be okay with that.

I next asked Julie to discuss her teaching philosophy. As she started, she noted how her lack of formal educational training influenced her answer:

> You know that's interesting because . . . I've just kind of got into [education] and it's interesting. . . . I didn't go to grad school. I just got my credential. I didn't have all of this time to process [my teaching philosophy]. I didn't sit around and think about it a lot. I understand why you should have that time to just take the different [educational] theories and those things [into account]. I also think it is important to have practical experience blended in with that theory as well.
>
> But as far as my philosophy . . . it's kind of muddled at the moment to be honest with you. It's really muddled. I feel like the longer I am in teaching and the older I get, I'm just much more conservative in the way I think and I am much less forgiving. So my teaching philosophy this month is that if your students don't want to be here . . . they are taking up our seats and, in my stress moments, I'm like, "They're taking up our seats and they're taking the support that other students could get who are interested in taking it."

Julie was dealing with a problem where the high standards of her school were at odds with many of her students' capabilities. As a result, they were becoming both academic and behavioral problems. Her frustration was evident. What she had said might have seemed callous, but she went on to explain her statement:

> I think our system is all kinds of messed up. We are trying to make this one type of person, to be a beautifully well-rounded math-science-liberal arts person who can write a beautiful essay and do algebra two. That's just not for everyone. And we are just creating these pockets of inadequacy for our students who are never going to fit into that prescribed structure. They can't sit for 6 to 8 hours a day. They just can't do that.
>
> We are all good at something and when you get that beaten out of you for six years and told that you are not good at anything, I feel like we are emotionally scarring some of these kids, you know? And it's interesting from the special ed. perspective of it. Students need to be given an opportunity to succeed. How a school defines success doesn't necessarily [coincide with] how well a student can perform. And so this school may not be the best setting for certain students and we need to recognize that fact and either change the school to meet their needs or find a better place for them to go. Trying to force these students to do something that they are clearly not capable of doing is a disservice to them.

Julie was then asked to discuss what she viewed as the purpose of education. Not surprisingly, her take on the general purpose of education was similar to what she had discussed in her response to the question about educational philosophy:

> We are here to give people opportunities. We are here to offer them the opportunity to make connections that they haven't made before. We're here to open their eyes little bit wider . . . within reason. That's important, you know? Within reason.

It is important to note that Julie emphasized "within reason." She continued:

> Information has to connect with them. Obviously we'll show it to them in different ways and we'll give them different mediums for expressing themselves. But there has to be some something there beforehand for us to help them latch onto. If there's nothing to latch onto, there's not much we can do. I don't think most schools see that as an important consideration. We just kind of take the students and throw an education at them and expect them to learn. Like I said, that just doesn't work for many of them.

Echoing her educational philosophy, Julie again went into how important it was for schools be able to properly give students an equitable education. Her critique of a standardized education system spoke to her desire to see a system that was more flexible, responsive and able to meet the needs and capabilities of students:

> But there are so many other things that so many of the students could do very well [other than standard curriculum and assessment] and be very successful with. The fact that

> they're not ever going to feel that at all, they're not ever feeling what it is to be successful, to feel like they did something good, to get recognition from people . . . I mean that's, that's an emotionally . . . not good. It's emotionally stunting. That can't be. That just can't set them up for goodness later or for wanting to take risks later or anything like that. And also they are feeling . . . you know that bravado and confidence that some of the [successful] students really have? That is the exact opposite of how they feel about themselves, about how competent they are. And [our system] is just putting fuel on the fire every single day. And [teachers] have to, it is the law that we have to, but that's what we are doing for a lot of them.

Dissatisfaction

Administration. The interview moved into working conditions where Julie experienced feelings of dissatisfaction. The first topic Julie discussed was the relationship with previous administrators. Answering in general terms, she described the importance that administration had played in her satisfaction:

> Depending on the environment it is very, very likely that there is going to be conflicts with administration. And it is one of those things where you assume that if someone is the head of the school or the head of any organization, head of the hospital, head of the school, they know everything. Right? They have thought of all of [the necessary] things, they always have backup plans, they're fairly reasonable. At least that is what I thought. [The administration] took [the job of leading]. So they should be able to do a good job, right? And then you find that they are just human, just like you. And you're like, 'Oh shit'. And then things start to fall apart. So administrative conflicts. . . can just completely taint your experience at a school, your experience with students. . .

When asked to discuss some of her experiences with administrators, Julie had first recalled how her principal sometimes would act when Julie requested assistance with students whom she had decided needed to leave the classroom due to excessive disruption:

> [Students] would have emotional explosions and you'd send them out. And it was not a crazy, "Oh my god, so-and-so is in a huge amount trouble." Sending someone out for stuff like that was fairly common. They'd get sent out to the counselor or to the administrator. And you would call her and say, “Can I send so-and-so to you [because] they have done X, Y or Z,” and she would [say], “No, I already have a student in here and my office is kind of small.” And this is after [I] told student they were going and then it's like, “Never mind.” Anyways that was a really . . . that gave me stress dreams

> because that totally took all of the power from me. My credibility [as a teacher and authority figure] was just shot after that.

Julie then compared that previous experience with the administrator whom she had been working with at the time of the interview. Her description hinted at what qualities Julie found important in an educational leader.

> I gravitate more towards [her current administrator]. I think she really knows her shit. She's seen a lot of different environments. Yeah. So she has worked at an NPS. She's worked at a special day class. She has worked in another environment. And now she is an administrator and she's got this five-year plan to open a school. So she's getting her PPS, her pupil personnel service credential right now. She's almost done so she can do the attendance at her school. I'm like, "Damn." She's an administrator that if she is in the room, you know she is going to be consistent and assertive when she needs to. You know she's gonna have your back.

Julie closed by discussing how she wanted to be treated and be able to interact with administration:

> I don't need you to love me, I don't need you to take me under your wing. I don't need to be your family. I just need you to do your job because I'm trying the best to do mine. And I just need you to speak clearly with me. As my administrator, you're supposed to . . . protect your staff. That's part of your job. And to offer us guidance and lead us when we need to be led. You need to know what is necessary and deliver it when it is needed.

Salary. The interview then moved to the topic of salary. When asked about salary, Julie did not have any major complaints. While she had acknowledged that she was not doing the job for the high pay, she still knew that her income was a realistic part of life that needed to be considered.

> We don't this for the high salary, but we do [work] for money. And I definitely know that there is a ceiling as a teacher as far as salary goes and that is huge. Actually, I don't know if that's a huge because I don't think that is the only thing keeping me from staying in teaching. But it's definitely part of it.
>
> There is this notion where the whole idea of a teacher is that if you tell someone you're a teacher, they're like, "Ooo, can you even go out to dinner with us tonight? Do you have any money?" I mean, of course we do. But still, the fact that the ceiling is set so

> low . . . especially for the amount of work we do. I don't know. Like I said, it's not the only reason I'd leave, but the money sure isn't doing anything to keep me here either.

When I made a comment about teacher salary and raising a family, Julie seemed to shudder at the thought of trying to run a family life on a teacher's salary.

> Oh God. I can't even . . . That scares me. I can't even imagine what that would be. I mean, I'm good now but to have to take care of a kid on this salary and live a life that I envision for myself? I can't see that happening. Oh god no.

Workload. The interview then moved to the topic of workload. Dissatisfaction regarding workload appeared to be a significant factor for Julie. Although she did not go into great detail on the issue in her response, the way she phrased her answer left little doubt about how much the workload was affecting her.

> This is turning into an 80 hour a week gig. Like, I would want to get paid more for an 80 hour a week job. I would want slightly more recognition for that kind of thing, at least. [The day is] very dense. It's just like you go. 8:30 comes around and you're like go, go, go all day.

She then discussed how the workload was impacting other areas of her life.

> And afterwards you're like, "I can't even, I can't even make dinner." Like I'm tired, drained. You know? Everything was kind of . . . I stopped excelling with my grades [in graduate classes]. I was not failing but I really, really kind of dropped the ball. It's funny. I can't go to the gym, I can't do any school work, I don't know what's in my fridge. I'm sure it's gummy bears or chow mein from last week.

After I had assured her that there was nothing wrong with gummy bears, she summed up her feeling about the amount of work that was necessary to do the job well:

> It's really hard. Yeah. So it's like nine months or ten months out of the year that you're shot. You're just completely depleted. Yeah, you have summers off. Yeah we have these two weeks off. I am attached to those breaks. I like them. But it doesn't seem to matter. I'm not rested at all after the breaks. Not even a bit.

Colleague interaction. The interview next explored Julie's experiences with colleague interaction. She began by discussing how she had almost always gotten along with colleagues in

her work environment. She noted that just because her peers were in the same profession did not necessarily mean that a strong relationship would form:

> Julie: Yeah but I think you'd be surprised about how much difference there could be [between coworkers]. . . . It's like any workplace where there are some people who have a the same level and you can talk frankly about these things. For me, it takes a certain, a slight amount of, just a little bit, but not too much cynicism and a little bit of darkness in their. . . .
>
> Interviewer: Realism?
>
> Julie: Realism. There we go. And sometimes it takes testing of the waters to find some people are going to swing a certain way. Or maybe they're going to still be on that high. It's usually in the first or second year teachers. [When I started], I was like, "This is amazing, I love everything about this school. I love my staff, I love my students, this is what I want to do! This is everything!" And then I was like, "I could change lives."
>
> Yeah. And now I'm like a little less than that. You know, I'm more realistic. So in answer to your question, it's been a mixed bag. I'm never going to get into huge conflicts with people. If I find someone who is not my cup of tea, I'll be like, "Okay, you're not someone I'm going to interact with." If you're someone that I don't connect with, I don't know what to say to you, at all. Even about teaching. I don't know what to say to you. About anything.

Julie then admitted that she had not created strong bonds with the staff that she was working with even though she enjoyed their company at both the working and personal levels. She highlighted how the stress she had been experiencing played a role in this dynamic:

> I don't know. At the [current] school it's been kind of a stressful year. And it sucks to meet people under these circumstances [even though] I think that looking for that camaraderie is cathartic. Sometimes, though, I'm tired and I don't want to see anyone from school. I don't want to think about school. I just want to go somewhere else out of the school and just process with people other than school related people. And that's been happening more than I'm used to.
>
> I don't know, I think I was kind of caught off guard here. I was caught off guard with all of the . . . I was used to more of the jadedness among the masses and [this school] has so much pep. They are still such idealists. But I'm like, 'I'm emotionally on my way out of education,' or at least the classroom. I'm like, "Fucking fuck. I don't know if I can compete with them.: I know I can't compete with the pep. It makes me feel like I'm really dropping the ball left and right. [The constant pep keeps making me feel like] it's not that hard. Everyone else can do it. So why can't I?'

I then asked Julie if she thought it was possible that the feelings of inadequacy she had been talking about could be manifesting themselves in her colleagues as well and that the pep that she had been discussing was actually a facade. After briefly thinking about her colleagues, Julie answered:

> You know I think you're absolutely right. Our superficial façade that we show off in the hallways or in the copier room. . . . As far as, "Everything is good how are you?" You know, that's totally garbage. Obviously people won't say, "Fuck, [today] was . . . hell all day," even though that is exactly what it was. I wonder what happens when everyone seems to be happy but everyone else also knows better? What happens when everyone is walking around with a superficial smile? That can't be good for morale.

I then asked Julie a final question about colleague interaction. Earlier in the response, she had mentioned the idea of colleague interaction being cathartic. Building off of that idea, I asked her about the importance of cutting through the facade and sharing openly about the struggles or successes that peers might experience.

> Researcher: Yeah, but do you think honest sharing might make you feel like you're not the only one? That debriefing [with colleagues] could help because you're being open and honest with people who can contextualize what you're talking about. Sharing the load as it were. That that notion of, "We're all in the same boat."
>
> Julie: No you're right. I again, I know you're absolutely right. I think that support is always beneficial. But my first reaction to things, to stressful situations, is to go away. I must process this by myself. That's just my personality I guess. I'm just going to deal with this on my own. That's just kind of how it is. I will say this, [if you can form that support system], it is one good thing you can always associate with work. And if there's not that, it could very well be like, "Fuckin' this again," when you think about having to go to work.

Mandated conditions. Next, Julie was asked to discuss her experiences with mandated conditions that she had to carry out as an educator. She discussed a mandatory behavior system that her school required all teachers to follow. The goal of this program was to have a site-wide set of norms and behavior practices so that both students and teachers would all have a common

way of dealing with school related situations. However, the program was highly scripted and staff was expected to follow the program verbatim. Julie described the program:

> The most structured program [I have ever encountered] is [this system]. I've never seen anything like it in my life. . . . When I first learned about that in orientation I came home with the manual and I was like, "Holy shit." I was calling people saying, "I got to tell you about this."

It was clear that Julie had never encountered such a scripted program outside of standardized testing, where even the language was prescribed for the teachers. Julie felt that the teaching style that she was being forced to follow was completely alien to how she has developed as an educator:

> The system is what worked for [the person who developed it] and good for her. But it is literally trying to make you into a form of her and I think people realized that. [A coworker] is a huge proponent of them, and I don't know why. And it may be the case that [the developer's] style and [the coworker's] personality work. I mean I've heard that his classes follow the system to a "T" and I've also heard that he's extremely authoritative in how he teaches, which would make sense. A lot of teachers who have frustrations [with the system] are teachers who really kind of . . . What's the word I'm looking for? What makes them good teachers is their rapport with the students. You know that personal relationship, which I think is everything. If that's how you approach [teaching] versus being authoritative, the [system] is not going work for you because the system is authoritative and behaviorist by nature.

Julie had connected how the authoritarian nature of the system made it so that her coworker, who embodied that same trait in his teaching, gravitated to the system. However, Julie's personality and teaching style, along with the majority of her coworkers, did not adhere to behaviorist and authoritarian tenets. As a result, the system felt alien to her. She recounted her first months trying to work within this highly scripted system:

> It was interesting. I think I feel like [a coworker] has talked about this a couple times. It was an interesting feeling coming in [and trying to do the system] because it was like, "I feel like I've never done this before. I feel like I've never taught. I feel really green and not in a good way." It's not that I'm inspired or learning new things because of this

> system. It's that I have no clue what I'm doing. And I'm just. . . . I'm failing and failing and failing and it creates some inadequacy in your teaching.

When asked about what she meant by "failing," she said that teachers had been measured by how well they were implementing the system. She mentioned that she and many of her coworkers had been feeling stress due to implementing a system that they had felt uncomfortable with and that their corresponding evaluations had reflected that lack of comfort. However, she also mentioned that, unlike her coworkers, she had a level of reprieve from the system as well:

> I think I'm held to different standards with [the system] to tell you the truth. Because [administration] is like, even [the creator of the system] was like, "I don't know if your kids can actually do it. They are kind of special." Yeah. You know I was like, "You're right, they can't." So I'm kind of off the hook.

When asked if there were any other mandated conditions that caused dissatisfaction, Julie noted that all of the special education procedures were sometime tedious but she understood why such procedures were in place. The only real source of unhappiness about mandated tasks stemmed from the behavioral system:

> That was initially stressing me out a lot and I was like, "Life's too short to stress out. I'm going to do as much as I can remember to do when I can remember to do it. And I'm just going to try to not, like, totally fuck up a legal document for a meeting this year. And I'll call that successful."

Personal control. The final question concerning dissatisfaction was about how much personal control Julie felt she had when it came to her job. Interestingly, Julie mentioned how there had seemed to be a lot of freedom to do certain parts of her job. However, that freedom was juxtaposed against all of the other things that were mandated:

> Yes actually, [the job] can be structured so many different ways and there is not any standard way to do it. So I do have a lot of control but that also opens up this idea of, like, you can do whatever you want. But there's this other side that says, "You should have this over here, that over there, and you should be checking this and this and this and this." Well fuck. I mean, I just haven't thought about that and I don't have those resources or I

> haven't had the time to do all of those things. So that personal freedom isn't quite a free as you might think. There are still a ton of expectations that you have to meet. It's like, "You can have your freedom but you better also do everything that we are expecting you to do," even though they aren't telling you exactly what they're expecting.

Even though Julie stated that she had felt completely overworked and was always crunched for time, she discussed her situation as compared to one of her friends who had worked at a school that was far more authoritative:

> My friend works at [another school] and she says that the way every single class is structured needs to look the same. So it needs to have a certain type of warm-up, a PowerPoint, group work, individual work, in every single class. And they come around and evaluate you weekly, biweekly or something and there is a rubric and you're graded. She has a 2.76 efficiency rating, whatever that means. Oh my God. And she's like, "This is crazy." I mean the level of control here is nothing like that. It makes me feel like I shouldn't be complaining.

Dealing with stress. The final question asked Julie how she dealt with stress and dissatisfaction. Probably more telling about the state of Julie as an educator than anything else were these four words: "I sought professional help."

Julie graciously went into some detail about the nature of her appointments with her therapist:

> I was talking about a stressful day and she was like, "Okay, it seems like you're kind of on your way out and okay, that's fine. You have six more months there. You need to think of this more experientially. Okay? This is an experience. And this is a situation that you really need to maintain an observer perspective. You need to try to not be a participant as much, meaning don't get emotionally riled up. Don't let the stress burden you. Try to find some distance and you'll be much happier and you'll be able to do your job better. Everything will line up better."And so that's literally like, I repeat that. "It's six months and this is an experience. Adversity is helpful but be the observer."

Looking back to what had occurred during the first semester, Julie discussed how she was trying to work through the rest of year:

> It's been really hard to not think about work. Just recently I've been able to find some distance, emotional distance. Before it would just be, like, I go to sleep [in response to the

> stress]. I think just changing my attitude and my perspective, reframing things, being able to say this is a learning experience, being gentle, all kinds of therapeutic things have really helped put me at ease. That's kind of the way I think. I'm trying to just remind myself, "You have this whole life, this whole identity apart from [teaching]. Let's talk about that and work on that." You definitely have to. Like, I think with any profession, you need to know how to take care of yourself. Do you have any messes in your backyard that you need to clean up? Clean them up, get a landscaper, deal with it. Make sure it's nice and then give everything that you have to other people every single day.

As the interview drew to a close, Julie and I casually discussed what kind of person it took to be an educator. Julie mused over if she fit the profile of a teacher:

> This is been a really interesting experience. It takes . . . I think it takes a person, this sounds kind of bad . . . It takes a person, I don't want to say more special than me. Maybe just a little different than me. If someone came to me and said, "I want to be a teacher, what do you think?" I'd say we need to talk for a long time. And we need to really flesh this out. This is not a decision one should take lightly.

Teacher 2 (Matt)

Educational philosophy and beliefs. Matt worked at a charter school that focused on serving marginalized youth. He was in his fifth year as a social studies teacher and also served on the curriculum development team. While many teachers who work in the inner city find jobs as a result of the high turnover rates—which leave numerous openings, or because they are placed there—Matt's decision to work with at-risk juveniles stemmed from a different motive. Matt was first asked about what led him to choose to become a teacher. He responded in the following way:

> When I think about where I'm at right now, I'm where I'm at because of the influence of teachers. A couple of teachers when I was at Crenshaw High School played a huge role in getting me to where I'm at right now. One who is still . . . a mentor to me [and] who's currently teaching at a juvenile detention center stands out. The main reason I teach is because of the influence they had on me and how I was able to turn my life around coming out of the inner city.

Matt's teaching philosophy spoke volumes about his personal beliefs as well as what he thought needed to be done in terms of working with students who had been pushed out of the educational system. His teaching philosophy was truly a cornerstone of his thought process as an educator and a strong foundation for how he responded to all of the questions in the interview:

> I would say, like . . . at the end of the day [my beliefs are] two fold. So it's from me to the students, the students back to me. But it's just a . . . philosophy that's built on what's possible. Like, my story is one where a lot of people would say that the things that I have accomplished for most people are impossible. So when I go into the classroom working with the group of students who have been disenfranchised, then targeted, then isolated, then dropped, pushed out of schools, discounted, devalued, everything, for me it's about helping them understand that it's possible [to achieve] as long as they are willing to work at it. So I bring the rigor in, build my curriculum around college content with the faith that these young people will be able to understand it and reach my expectations as long as I'm doing my job as a teacher to help them understand the content and acquire the skill sets necessary to do so.

Matt was then asked what he found rewarding about teaching. While his statement could apply to teachers from a range of backgrounds and environments, it was easy to see how his teaching philosophy connected with what he found rewarding about being a teacher. It was also intriguing to see that what he found rewarding gave a glimpse into how Matt attempted to carry out his philosophy:

> I think at the end of the day for me, it's the faith that the students have in me as a person first and as a teacher second. Knowing that I have their best interests in mind. There's a level of trust that they have with what I'm trying to bring to them. I think [there's a level of faith] also in knowing that I'm trying to help them identify skill sets, a way of thinking, a way of doing that will lead them to changing their lives. And that is modeled after things that I have done in my life. So I'm very transparent with them. They know everything about my past and where I'm coming from.

When asked to talk about the purpose of education in a general sense, Matt's response was generic. This was to be expected as he tried to encompass the entire system rather than speak about a targeted group or environment:

> I think the purpose is to open the mind. Like, I think education from the start until whenever a person chooses to end it on a formal basis is to open the mind. It's to tap into the curiosities that we have as people and to allow us to discover what was once unknown.

Dissatisfaction

Administration. As with many of the teachers who were interviewed, when asked about dissatisfaction with the administration, Matt shared multiple experiences. His first response was in respect to classroom observations:

> [The way my administrator acts is] very amateur. Everything. The feedback I got was not helpful at all and I ended up having to submit five-page reflections on things that had nothing to do with what I was talking about. Nothing, nothing at all [from her critique was useful]. I'm sorry. [The reflection] had nothing to do with [my lesson] and I'm expected to fill in these open-ended questions on a Saturday when I should've been planning for other classes? To me, that's a sign of just having a very green administrator.

Matt then discussed the ways in which the administration seemed to be driving the organization. Because his school was a charter organization, the administration was in control of the academic direction:

> A lot of [what we do] seems to be driven by [the assistant principal's] personal interests and ideals as it relates to education. To me . . . it was sort like a slap in the face because of how incapable she is, or at least I think she is. The assistant principal seems to have an agenda about a whole lot of things and we're forced to follow her.

He went on to describe that the assistant principal's agenda-driven actions were indicative of leadership in general. His major concerns came from the fact that he had perceived a level of untruthfulness surrounding the goings-on of the school. It is important to note that the school operated with partner entities that helped run the sites. It was a difficult, convoluted relationship to understand. Matt noted that the charter organization had claimed that the role of their teachers should more or less match that of teachers in any standard environment. However, he found that in practice that was not the case:

> [The school is] unwilling to establish non-negotiables as it relates to an agreement of responsibilities that educators are supposed to carry out. We don't know exactly what we are supposed to be doing and where our responsibilities start and stop. And that develops due to lack of structure on the site and a lack of structure within the school. Teachers only have a vague understanding of responsibilities, a vague understanding of how to deal with certain things, almost no policies in place that would we could follow that would govern our actions. And I think that is all an intentional part of how the administration runs. They could easily step in and set everyone straight. But they choose not to and I have to think that they have an agenda to run that is not necessarily known to the rest of us.

When asked to expand on the idea that this might have been an intentional tactic used by his administration, Matt responded:

> Yes and I also strongly believe that that's [the executive director's] strategy and that the strategy of the school so that the educators . . . can continue to [assist in] meeting the agenda of our partner sites. [The intentional ambiguity is there] because [administration doesn't] want to help us mediate our way out of the conflict where someone is asking us to do something that's not within our pay grade or job description. So at the end of the day the [underlying motive is] about preserving and maintaining that business relationship where the connection is strongest between the charter and the executive directors of the [partner] programs. The teachers have no say in anything. We're very expendable.

Matt's sense that this business relationship was the primary focus of the school rather than reaching students was disturbing. I asked Matt to expand on this and discuss other ways that he had seen this manifest in the work environment.

> I truly believe that it is in the best interest of the charter to allow this type of environment, this chaotic environment, to exist because it also prevents teachers from staying too long because they know that staying long equals more money. So it's in the best interest to have a high turnover so they can continue to bring in green teachers out of education programs. [In my case] they'd end up paying a fraction of the money that they would end up paying if I stay longer. On top of that, they don't have to compete with the questions that might come about from more veteran teachers.

Referencing the schools purported mission as an authentic learning and socially conscious environment, he continued:

> So I think that there's . . . an obvious disconnect between being in an environment that champions itself as an authentic education environment but then also does not support teachers when it comes to creating a space that allows us to design authentic lessons and authentic projects. [Instead] we're often brought into these environments and used sort of as free labor for programs that need to hit numbers as it relates to average daily attendance (ADA). So the disconnect being that we are led to believe [educating] is what we are going to be doing but then not being able to do that. But that's how we're identified as professionals so we do whatever our superiors tell us to do. The result is that we find ourselves consumed by, quite frankly, responsibilities that I think aren't my responsibilities. I wasn't trained to go out and go into the neighborhood and do all of these [recruiting and funding activities]. My skill set is geared towards teaching and creating lessons. I'm not in an environment that allows me to do that.

I asked Matt to talk about how these underlying, hidden agendas of the administration had impacted the learning environment with a real world example.

> Sure. So generally speaking at the site we've had this constant battle with the need to have students for ADA as a way for the site to secure funding. [The constant recruitment of students leads] to an environment where instead of us creating stability for students who have lacked it, and [we know that] the lack of stability [is the] primary cause of not doing well in school, we actually recreate instability by having a revolving door of students coming into the class. So instead of me being able to fully engage the class with the lessons that I've created, I'm constantly onboarding students into the classroom. The constant changing of students affects the teams. The classroom structure pretty much changes every day [and] every week, [which] makes it very difficult. There's no continuity. So, that's one of the big ones.
>
> Another one is being in an environment [run by the partner] that, at a whim, could interrupt the teaching process [for whatever or whenever they deem it necessary]. Spur of the moment drug test, spur of the moment cancellation of the class session because of something that's perceived as, I guess, necessary. [That] makes it very difficult.

Matt next discussed his perception of his ability to communicate with administration. As he had mentioned in the previous topic, Matt sensed purposeful ambiguity when it came to administration's communication with its staff:

> [The principal] never has a definite answer and that is critical. There is a lot of frustration with me and a lot of frustration with colleagues because we don't feel like we have someone who's willing [to stand up] on behalf of us, especially given our charter's mission: social justice and fighting for those who are powerless. There are often times [teachers] are left powerless when we are dealing with conflict that [the principal] should be in a position to negotiate between us and the partner to come to an understanding.

> Instead what [administration] wants to do is create the illusion that [they] offered us a solution but [in the example of recruiting for ADA], we are still doing what we should not be doing, which is also taking away from what we should be doing, which is teaching, grading, [and] designing lessons.

Matt had been on a leadership team and was one of the more veteran teachers within the organization. He was well respected by his peers and the administration. Because of this, he had many opportunities to speak directly to the school leadership. I asked Matt how they responded when he brought up his concerns in a direct manner:

> It's almost as if every time I bring it up to leadership . . . it's something that they don't want to hear and often times I end up leaving the meeting feeling like I'm more isolated now than I was before. [I also feel] that anybody [who] is associated with me, by default, is part of the problem as well. [This is] because there is a belief that I'm also talking to [my colleagues] about how things could be as opposed to how things are . . . and I believe that they think that's dangerous. My goal is to try to create consciousness [around an issue]. So for me, what is consciousness might be a dangerous idea for leadership. Countless times I've seen colleagues silenced in a variety ways. That sure has a chilling effect to the point where this year there are issues that we are dealing with that, in previous years, I would've directly addressed my concerns and thoughts with leadership. This year I haven't.

Salary. The interview then moved into Matt's feelings on his compensation as an educator. He mentioned how his starting pay with the charter school was very competitive. However, his initial satisfaction changed as he came to realize what the work environment demanded of him:

> I will always remember this conversation as related to joining the school that I'm with. My wife, who taught within a large district, told me, "Yes that's a lot of money but they're going to expect a lot more from you than just teaching." At the time I couldn't understand what she meant by it but now I do. It's to the point where I'm not just a teacher. Now I'm sort of like a quasi-administrator at the site. I'm a recruiter, I'm a social worker, therapist. I'm all of these things so you could question whether I'm getting paid a lot or if I'm underpaid. But I do know one thing: the site [partners] think of me and other teachers as free labor to be used to do [non-teacher related] things that they should be doing because our leadership won't advocate on behalf of teachers.

I asked Matt if he had been made aware about nonteaching related duties being a part of the deal and if teachers had known that they were expected to take on these roles when they were hired. After he had responded that they were hired to be teachers and their responsibilities were more or less equivalent to comprehensive public teachers, I asked if the addition of noncontractual duties was ever addressed by administration:

> Has anything happened? No. Do I know what my responsibilities are? No. Do other teachers? No we don't. We do know the sites and the executive directors treat us in a way where they know that there aren't any consequences for [adding responsibilities to teachers' workload]. They pretty much demand us to do [these extra duties]. So that leads me to wonder what is that agreement between the executive directors and the CEO as it relates to how we're being treated because those of us who have expressed [a desire about] being more transparent are the ones who are not at the table when it comes to having meetings between the school leadership and [its partners]. So I just think they purposely go about things to keep us in the dark so that were doing more than we should otherwise be doing.

Workload. The previous answer had begun to blend compensation and workload so I asked Matt to speak more about his responsibilities within his work environment:

> So with work hours, I arrived at 7:30 and on a good day and I'm out by 4:45. At least once a week I'm in a meeting that could last until six o'clock and that's just a site meeting. And that's on a day where students get out at 2:40 and the meeting started at 3:00. So why do we need to have a three-hour meeting? I don't know. Have expressed our concern to leadership? Yep. Assistant principal, principal? Yes. Has anything happened? No. Coupled with sitting in traffic and then having about two to three hours to actually decompress, hang out with my wife, help with the baby . . . and I'm still dealing with issues of lesson planning and all these other random related site tasks that come to us via e-mail. So it's not traditional hours. It's a lot of work. I don't know if it's a lot more than what other teachers do in different contexts but it's still a lot.

Colleague interaction. Matt was then asked to talk about his interaction with colleagues. He began by discussing how teachers and staff interacted at the working level:

> So at this time we meet once a week for a meeting. Usually we go in and it's very reactive to whatever is happening at the site. So again here it is: We have the space that should be dedicated to us collaborating and sharing out ideas and best practices that then is often hijacked by site needs. So instead of us being able to do these things that help us

> grow as professionals, we're attending to site matters that could be related to ADA recruitment, student concerns, etc. So to be quite honest, as a person who's responsible for leading these meetings, it's a waste of time. I feel guilty being the lead teacher.
>
> At the organizational level, we usually meet as a large group three times a year. But there wasn't really much benefit to doing that. The workshops during the professional development (PD) were teacher driven. Again these are teachers who are overwhelmed with full loads so that watered-down professional development. I can only question how much the committee that plans PD has to give up to run PD and, as a result, had their classrooms and responsibilities [negatively affected]. But that's a whole other issue. And then we would get together [during PD] and nothing really would happen. PDs were treated as retreats. Like we are going there to relax, etc. and it was all very frustrating. Especially for those of us who did care and have been fighting for more collaboration on our end. You know, teachers showcasing things that they're doing or trying to bring in stuff from the outside. There was nothing there for those of us who wanted to grow as educators.

I then asked Matt to briefly talk about any relationships among colleagues that might have gone beyond the work setting:

> Uh, no. I think you're so tired at the end of the day that we just want to go home. I do have, I guess, as close as a personal relationship as you can with a couple people at my site but that's about it. And these are often individuals who, for me, demonstrated the same commitment to the students as I have and so there is a natural connection and everything. So were constantly fighting the power. The extent of our relationship after work is text messaging back and forth at home and that's it.

Mandated conditions. I next asked Matt to discuss any mandated conditions at his school. He described an interesting blend of mandates and freedom within the curriculum framework they had been given. For Matt, there was a high level of confusion about what he felt was being expected of him and how to best carry out those expectations:

> In terms of the curriculum, I like the fact that it is authentic and if I choose, I'm able to create an entire curriculum, which I have done for certain classes. Not necessarily from scratch. I'll use for materials that I have acquired from colleagues or different places but I'm able to arrange and use a diverse range of materials. So I like the framework that we have because it allows me that freedom. However it's also a framework that requires projects to be designed and produced by students and that's where I've had the biggest issues. I've gone to leadership and explained that, in theory, they presented us with a framework that most of us could understand. But in practice, I could never . . . In the three plus years I've been there . . . I have never seen what an actual project of quality

> looks like from those who are responsible for creating the framework. So no one is quite sure what the end result of this framework looks like. And so that's been the main issue. I had spoken about it on numerous occasions. There doesn't seem to be an interest in [creating a model] so I've taken it upon myself to do research to try to figure out what's considered an authentic project. So I'm doing my own personal and professional development on my own free time.

I then asked if there was a framework, but the framework did not give direction, how did teachers make sense of what they should be doing?

> So the rigor will come from the individual instructors who are in it for personal reasons; those who look after the best interest of the student. So I attempt to bring rigor into the classroom because I think it's important. It's really up to the teacher.

I asked Matt if having a framework that gave little direction ended up leaving the teachers as the sole force that was driving what students were accomplishing:

> Yes, that's a problem. I don't take advantage of being in an environment where there is almost no accountability. However I started to realize certain limitations that I had after going through the teacher induction program by the county and began to realize the importance of acquiring data as you establish benchmarks so that you can measure student progress as well as your effectiveness as a teacher. And as I started to learn more about this through the induction program, I started to bring my concerns to leadership. Again it was more of the same politician-like response. "Again, we know what you're saying but nothing [is going to be] done by top leadership." A perfect example of this was when this [idea of metrics] struck my assistant principal and it was almost as if she had an "Ah-ha" moment. It was like the first time she was making the connection between having clearly established benchmarks and being able to [empirically] measure students' progress over the course of the academic year.

Matt's school had a unique system whereby it placed students in classes based off the gaps in their transcripts. Although it was the most efficient way to graduate students, Matt found a serious logical fallacy in trying to run a school in this manner. I asked Matt to discuss what it was like working in an environment where students had been placed in classes based off of their high school credit needs rather than their ability level:

> [Part of working at this school] is accepting the reality as it relates to your students and their skill level. So if you're a math teacher and you want to introduce rigor, let's say you

want to try to have a class dedicated to trigonometry, the reality is the teacher might only have three students there [who could utilize that level of learning]. But the need from the majority of students is very basic. So when you look at that type of situation, I think what it does is it takes a highly skilled math instructor, it takes that person and reduces them to the lowest common denominator because of the students they are working with. Very deficient math skills so that the courses that we're offering are test prep courses, very basic math, etc. Now you couple that with the inability of leadership to want to help us establish a structure as it relates to how classes are being sequenced throughout a trimester and year with a solid approach for how a student might move from [one level to the next], you get even more, I don't know the right word, more hopelessness [from] the teacher.

Here's a crazy thing: A student could need 20 math credits to satisfy the requirements [for graduation]. The student in theory could earn all 20 of those credits in one particular trimester. Students could be placed into multiple math courses at the same time and be allowed to try to earn credit in all of those courses at the same time. Math is something that is very linear and it should be sequential, progression based. Our setting allows for those students to be overloaded with math and knock it out in a three-month period and we deem them proficient . . .

We'll we have four teachers at a particular site, one for each subject area. If I'm teaching every class that I'm qualified to teach, then I would be teaching government, economics, United States history and world history. Those are four classes but then there are two other or three other periods I could teach. Let's say it's first semester so I'm teaching the first half of all four classes. But what about the other three open periods I have? Those could be filled up teaching [the second half of US history and the second half of world history].

Theoretically, you could have a student who has me for four different classes. In two periods they would be getting the first and second half of US history simultaneously and for two more classes getting the first and second half of world history at the same time. It can sort of work in history. Not really, but sort of. But it definitely doesn't work in math. You can't take the first half of algebra and the second half at the same time. Then it gets into, "Is that person being positioned to succeed or is being positioned to fail?" And is the teacher succeeding or failing because the student is too overwhelmed with all these history or math courses because our purpose is to give them credits to graduate? And from an educational ethics point of view, are we really doing best by the students when we deliver content in this manner?

Personal control. Keeping in mind what Matt had said about the framework and how it lacked direction and accountability, I asked him to discuss how much personal control he felt he had in his job. He responded thusly:

So I feel that this is very paradoxical what I am about to say. One, I feel like I have no control. I feel like, I've mentioned it, I'm working with people who are not qualified. I

> have to attend to issues that they bring up because they tell me I have to. I feel like the environment from leadership perspective is micromanaging and is micromanaged by people who, for whatever reason, from a professional standpoint, I don't respect. I know that sounds wrong, but I also know me and I defer to people that I respect, from people who have taught for a while to people who have proven that what they do for the type of student that I'm committed to actually works, there is a natural deference that I give them. I have struggled with that with current leadership. I am very aware of it. I know it's consuming me when I'm being asked to do certain tasks that don't have any purpose. From that standpoint I would say none.
>
> On the flip side of this, on a scale of one to ten, I would probably say eight. Because again, while I said they micromanage, there is no follow through and because there is no follow through, I know that I have a lot of flexibility to do as I want in the classroom. So it gets back to me being as creative as [I want to be] in the classroom where I am designing lessons and projects and doing things through mobile technology, social media, and designing classes on 2Pac or a teacher training class and like all of these different things. So I know I have the ability to do these creative things because of a lack of follow through on the charter's end as it relates to whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing.

I asked Matt about that paradox in control and how he had seen it manifest itself in the larger organization. Specifically, Matt was asked about how others had dealt with that seemingly intense micromanaging, coupled with little follow through and accountability and whether or not it was a good thing for the organization. He responded:

> Yeah. I think you said it perfectly and I think it extends to everyone. We can assume control as long as we want to assume control and I think that's the difference between myself and other educators within the context [of most of my colleagues being relatively new to the job] and the vast difference of job security [between me and everyone else due to my position within the school]. Others don't realize that they have the ability to take control because they're so green that they are allowing themselves to be manipulated misused and abused by both the charter and by also the partner organizations.

Dealing with stress. The final question of the interview asked Matt to discuss how he dealt with the stress from the dissatisfying conditions he faced as a teacher:

> So my initial tendency is to react. So that's how I am in a lot of aspects of my life. In a cause-and-effect moment, I'm immediately reactive. I learned since teaching and everything, because of the young people, that that wasn't good. I've become very patient in the classroom, respectful to the young person and that's translated and how I deal with these issues now. So there is an element of just me trying to be patient and allow things to

play [themselves] out, but then also pick and choose my battles and realizing that it probably wasn't worth me saying anything to the CEO about acknowledgements [for my work] during our professional development over the summer. Now this big issue of ADA . . . is something where I feel like at a certain point I am going to write something or say something. So it's picking and choosing battles. And the biggest thing that I'm learning now is that, and I don't know if I'm rationalizing this, but it is okay just to let go. And I don't know if letting go or I'm turning into that person who's become an apathetic. I know now that I sit in meetings at the site and I don't care about half of the stuff that they're saying. And there is real concern that I'm with other colleagues who are like that. And I'm wondering what is the toll on me now

I told my students that if I ever got to the point where I wasn't willing to put in the extra hours at home to create something or if I ever got to the point where I was unwilling to develop an idea, I knew it was time for me to go. I know I'm becoming very apathetic in meetings at the site, apathetic [to the larger organization] where I'm not responsive to e-mails or to the things that they're saying I have to do. It's like, "Whatever, I'm not doing kind of thing." It has not yet trickled into the classroom. But there is concern. I've always known that I'm not going to be the teacher who's in the classroom feeling like that because then it becomes very toxic to myself, very toxic to my students. As someone who's grown up in a very toxic household and environments, I am very aware and going to counseling and all of that of stuff has helped me become more aware. So it hasn't gone the route of being brought into the classroom. I hope it doesn't. I hope I can leave feeling great about it. I hope I leave on my terms as opposed to the organization pushing me out or it just being a negative end. I want to leave on a good note.

I asked Matt a hypothetical question:

Researcher: You have a plan and you're on your way out of the classroom. Let's pretend for a minute that leaving wasn't an option and you were forced to stay teaching. What do you think might happen?

Matt: It could ruin my marriage. It got to that point my first year. Last year was a little rough. My saving grace this year was my wife being pregnant and my son being born in September. It was the best timing if that makes sense because I had my curriculum in place and there are certain things that I don't have to stay up to continue planning and I can just cater to home needs and everything. But yeah, if I stay longer and the way that I feel, it could move in a direction of ruining my marriage because I'm still in the process of trying to compartmentalize things that are happening [at school] from things that are happening at home and if history is any indication, I haven't done that too well. So ruin the marriage or I would turn to that teacher that students always talk about. "I'm going to get paid regardless of whether you learn or not," kind of thing.

Teacher 3 (Michelle)

Educational philosophy and beliefs. At the time of the interview, Michelle worked as a choir and yoga teacher at a charter school in Los Angeles. She had spent 15 years in the classroom. She discussed how she had wanted to be a teacher ever since she was a little girl:

> Well to me, I was that little girl who played school growing up. . . . My parents had an old desk from an old schoolhouse where the chairs of the desks were connected from front to back. They had the lid and you'd have all your stuff. . . . So even as a little girl I would play teacher set the dolls up and my brothers and sister would play along. So I don't know what made me want to be a teacher. I have aunts and uncles who were teachers and my parents were teachers so I think I just always loved school.
>
> And then when I was in high school and I really started singing I fell in with love my choir teacher. She was such a role model for me. And I realized I wanted to be a music teacher. It didn't occur to me to be a singer or anything. I wasn't one of those kinds of people. I didn't want to be famous or anything but I really wanted to teach music. I love choirs and I love singing. And, I think what really inspired me was my high school choir experience.

Michelle's philosophy on teaching matched her background for why she wanted to become a teacher. Michelle became a teacher to share her passion with others:

> I want the students to become well-rounded people who love the arts, who find some kind of sense of, not solace maybe, but a sense of joy in singing music. They might not ever be good at it, they might not ever go into it, but I would love to raise a generation of students that, as adults say, "I took music once and I've never regretted it." And want their kids to take music. Or if they hear something on the radio, they understand what's going on in the music. "Oh that was a crescendo," or "That was a rest," or whatever. I want music to not be so foreign, not be a foreign language to them.

When asked about the part of the job she loved, Michelle described the most rewarding aspect of teaching the way many teachers do:

> I mean it's so cliché but that light bulb moment is always great. When you're teaching music and kids have a response like, "Oh my God that just happened." Something lovely and unexpected. I can still picture the faces of some students like, "Oh my God, it's so fun! We actually sound good!" You know there're moments where, "I finally get how to sight read." "That's what that means." You know I remember one little girl who said, "Miss, music involves every subject and I didn't even know it." And you know there're moments where it just all comes together. That's rewarding.

> You know it's cool to be a music teacher because you get to have supposedly fun things happen throughout the year that are joyful, whether it's competition trips or exciting things that the kids can do together, and I like being a teacher of the subject that's a team effort. You can't have a choir with one person. It's a group activity and I love that collaboration.

The next question asked Michelle to describe the general purpose of education:

> I think on the surface it's really easy to say, "Get them ready for college and prepare them for their careers." But I think it's more than that. I don't think you have to go to college to be successful. My brother isn't a college graduate and he owns his own business and is very successful. But I think it's a little deeper than that. It's learning how to work with other people, it's learning how to take instruction, it's learning how to provide for yourself and what needs to be done and what doesn't need to be done and accepting the consequences of that. It is like your job. It is like the job of the kid that you get to go have fun on the weekends like teachers and adults do and when you are at school you have your job. I think you have to learn responsibility. I think you learn leadership. I think it's a place where you can discover your talents and your shortcomings. And hopefully you have an environment in a school situation that you are free to explore all those things. I don't think kids always do. But ideally, if you were to create the perfect school it would be to teach kids how to grow up; how to think for themselves, without harming others.

Dissatisfaction

Administration. Michelle was asked to discuss experiences that she had with previous administrators. She started off by discussing an administrator that she had to deal with at her prior school. Her largest complaint was that she and her colleagues felt like they were being treated with a false sense of professional courtesy:

> I've had a really crappy administrator who was smiling, smiling, smiling. And everything she said was full of shit. And to make us feel better we'd get doughnuts. She'd always say, "There's always M&Ms on my desk," and that was the big joke. "We don't want your fucking M&Ms." You know you can't literally sugarcoat everything. You literally can't sugarcoat everything. See, I was on her good side so I didn't see it for a while. And the first time I realized, "Oh you guys don't like her? What's going on? Because she's awesome to me." But then I realized, "Oh she's full of shit. Wow, that's not really working out." And we never felt like we were being treated with respect even though she thought she was saying yes to everything. We knew that that wasn't a real, true yes. It was a "Yeah get out of here." It was a feeling of, "Yeah whatever," with a pat on the head. You know that kind of feeling? And I think there were people that got things they wanted and there were people who thought that they were going to get something and

didn't get it. So it created a rift in the staff. It trickled down to, “Oh she likes you but she doesn't like me.” It became really annoying to deal with because she never was straight with us.

Michelle then juxtaposed that experience with another administrator whom she had worked with. She discussed how the perception of honest communication and professional courtesy from administration actually had created a bond among staff:

> I think for me a good administrator is honest and has your back. They will stand up for you to a parent or a superintendent. I know our principal would stand up to a superintendent who was horrible. She was a tyrant in Texas. But we loved our principal because she would stand up for us. She might not always get her way but she would say, “This is what I said but she said no to me. But I told her what you needed.” And we loved that about her. She wasn't afraid for her job. She put herself on the line for what we needed. And she respected us all. She treated us like equals. All of us were important. The music program was as important as the science program and it was as important as the math program. And she would come to [events]. She was there. “Here's your classroom budgets, you all get the same.” It felt fair. And she brought the staff together by just doing that. We didn't play games, do teambuilding, and all that stuff. And it wasn't about doughnuts, it wasn't about an espresso machine. It was that we were all treated with dignity.

I asked Michelle about the importance of communication with administration. She briefly talked about an administrator that she had dealt with whose communication skills were severely lacking:

> I would say the most extreme person that I've met would be [a previous administrator]. I mean, she is so extreme that she doesn't even listen. It's like she's behind the wall. And that's the hardest. I think that's the worst of all is someone who doesn't even listen to you and doesn't care to. How do you even begin to communicate with someone who can't or won't listen to a thing you have to say? The close mindedness and inability to think beyond herself. It's amazing someone actually operates in that way.

Michelle mentioned the concept of predictability and the importance of being able to “guesstimate,” with a reasonable level of accuracy, how a given administrator would respond to a situation. Administrators who communicated poorly lacked a necessary level of predictability:

> Maybe it is just the idea that you're living in a constant state of, "I don't know what's going on." Even though it's not extreme and it's not going to destroy your classroom, it's just the feeling of, "I don't know, and that frustrates me that I don't know." It wasn't predictable [at that site]. It was, "Well gosh, [other teachers] didn't get that," so you start to second-guess yourself as a teacher. And you're like, "Gosh, I would really love to do that with my students, but I'm 90 percent sure I can't ask for it." Or, "Oh God she's coming to observe me now. What is she looking for? Did I make my lesson plans the way she wants them? I don't really know."

Conversely, Michelle noted that feeling like she knew where her administrators stood and what they wanted was a major burden off her shoulders.

Salary. Michelle next spoke about her salary. Unlike the rest of the teachers who were interviewed, she did not express strong dissatisfaction with her compensation:

> That, to me, is the least of my worries in the education profession. I've never heard a person say that that is what kept them from becoming a teacher. Every teacher wants more money, but every banker wants more money, everyone wants more money. I feel like that we just think we work so hard and [our job is] so personal that, when you just look at the hours we put in . . . Does a doctor work harder than us? I don't know. It's just weird.

Workload. After hearing her thoughts on salary, I wanted to compare that answer to her perception of how much time and effort she had put into her job.

> So I think the work hours and the workload. . . . That's tough, that's a hard one. Because we're not just grading papers, we're doing so much more than that. And with the addition of technology, I mean, if everyone turned their assignments in on time, that would make our lives a little bit easier because then you would just move onto the next thing. But there's always that extra thing, there's always that parent phone call to make and that takes something extra. There's always that one more thing on that to-do list and you can't uncheck it. And with all the additions of things that help us like technology . . . Well now I have to check my emails and now I have to put the grades in my computer and . . . Well now I have to do this, this, and this. And I have to go to the SST, and then the IEP meeting and then I have to come back and put pictures on the wall. . . . So I mean it's just this never-ending list of stuff to do and I find it exhausting trying to keep up with everything.

I asked Michelle about the common question surrounding prep periods and how these played a factor in allowing teachers time to complete the required tasks of the job:

> That's tough. I've mentioned it briefly but the fact that we have one prep and half-an-hour lunch is not enough time to get things done. All of us take stuff home. I wish that it wasn't a money-saving thing for the school district to make us work more hours during the day. I wish we could have two periods off. I wish we could teach five of seven [periods], or six out of eight and give us that time to get work done, to breathe, to plan, to collaborate.
>
> I know people always think teachers are so lucky. They only work nine months a year or whatever. And those of us that teach know that's not true. And having a day where you're working 8:00AM to 4:00PM and only have a half-hour off. What grown-up has a half-hour lunch? It's a lunch hour. It's ridiculous that were not even given time to like eat and be with our colleagues and socialize. This is the schedule, the day-to-day schedule, [and it] can be really frustrating and can feel like a whirlwind and be exhausting and not having just time to be a person for a second. It can be frustrating.

I then asked Michelle to talk a little more about the "whirlwind" she had described:

> Man it's a long day. And it starts early, earlier than most people have to go in, and you're on a treadmill the entire day. You know you can't rest . . . That is a big struggle and that is such a huge burnout. You go from being an entertainer when you're leading your class to being a standard educator when you're teaching. Then you will be a counselor to the parents of the students, the artistic director who puts up all the stuff in your room, you got the I.E.P. to do. . . .Work comes in from so many different angles that it's just never ending and vicious. It's always one more thing to do and always not enough time.
>
> And man does [my staff] forget [that the work will never end, not matter how much we do]. This campus is horrible. There are people here until six or seven at night and I'm one of them. And I'm part-time. It's . . . We're crazy. We are over dedicated to the point where no one cares except us. You know sometimes it's like, "I'm the only one that cares that I'm here until seven."

I asked Michelle to reflect and talk a little more about the feeling of working hard for the sake of working hard:

> Oh yeah, you have to remember to always take care of yourself so you don't have a mental breakdown, which you just have to look around the school right now to see people struggling with that a lot. And on the days where we might not literally take stuff home, we're thinking about it until we go to bed. I, you know, woke up at 1:30 in the morning thinking about my kids and what I might do about the situation and, not to say that other people don't take their work home, but man it's so personal and it's so connected to who we are that you can't just turn it off when you leave for the day.

Colleague interaction. Michelle next spoke about the power that she found in the way that she and her colleagues interacted both inside and outside of the work environment.

> I think peer interactions are a huge part of my life here at school. [My staff] is awesome in that respect and it means so much to me to be able to consider the people I work with to be real, genuine friends. It makes coming to work that much better. You know, when all the kids are being little shits and the day just drags on, there's something awesome about being able to look around and be with people who are just genuinely good people that you enjoy hanging out with. Honestly, this year has been really, really rough for me. I feel like it's getting better but there are still plenty of days where I look around and am just tired. And I don't know if I would have made it without [the staff]. And I know that it was an important thing for [the principal] to put together a staff that would get along but I also think that we just got lucky too. I mean, how well do you think that you can get to know people in an interview. But it all worked out wonderfully.
>
> So yeah, when I think about the strengths of the school and what I like most about working here, it's really the interaction among that staff that comes to mind. I mean, from the get go, heading out on Fridays was one of the best icebreakers ever, right? I mean, who the hell wants to do a name game when we could head out and drink together and just screw around for a couple hours. That connection is so good. And I think you see us leaning on each other. I mean, I really feel like everyone here can depend on each other. Even the administration. And that is such a great thing.

When asked about her previous experiences, Michelle discussed what she thought was the standard pattern of interaction between teaching colleagues:

> You know, the cliché interactions. You liked some people, didn't like others but most people you were pretty indifferent towards. I mean you'd be friendly and professional towards them but there wasn't any real substance there. And that's fine. It's not like there needed to be. I guess being here just kind of highlights how good things could be if that relationship aspect of the job played a larger role in the school. So yeah, I had some people who were friends but for the most part, we came to work, were courteous and professional, and then went home. And it worked out fine for the most part. It was nothing to write home about, you know?

Mandated conditions. Michelle next discussed dealing with some of the mandated conditions associated with her job. She started by describing the ways in which preparation for high stakes testing had played a role in her job as a music teacher:

> Yeah, I had a year where we were shifting around a little bit in my school in Texas and admin would be, “Oh so-and-so needs to make up their math work so we're pulling them from your class,” or, “So-and-so needs this so were pulling them.” At one point I was like, “No. Then I'm going to pull them from your class to make up what he missed, because I have a class too.” And they finally went, “Oh.” Yet it took me to go, “No.” And it was kind of a localized situation but you have to change people's minds sometimes. It's

> hard to do that, especially when they feel the pressure from higher powers to get that high stakes testing or whatever done. You know, I get that math and English are important and that we get assessed in those areas but it really sucks knowing that my class is expendable and has to defer to that kind of stuff.

Michelle then spoke about a behavior program that she had been forced to follow at her current school site:

> Yeah, I just don't get it. I don't think I've been so opposed to anything as I have been to this system. I mean beyond the fact that [the creator] is probably the most annoying person I've ever come into contact with, the system just flat out doesn't work. We're asked to do ridiculous things that I would have never considered doing as a teacher. I mean, I get the whole standardization thing so that students can have a similar expectation from all staff members, but this takes it to a whole new level. I mean, control exactly how I say things in class? Forcing students to do things that I believe are way below their maturity level? I mean, which high school students are forced to line up facing forward silently before they are allowed into class? Seriously, this isn't a military school. So yeah, it's just ridiculous. And like I said, it doesn't work.
>
> And I guess that's what's so frustrating. You know, if it got amazing results and things were so awesome, that'd be one thing. Because then I could get on board with it because it was clearly better than what I was doing. But it doesn't. Not even close. I think it actually creates more problems than it does solutions. And to tell you the truth, I've been doing this job for a long time. I'm by no means perfect and there's always room for growth but I don't think anyone is ever going to come up with a system that is going to solve all behavior problems of teenagers. And especially if that system is asking me to be someone I'm not. I haven't been in the classroom for 15 years by being incompetent. In fact, I'm pretty good. It's just a slap in the face personally by asking me to be someone I'm clearly not and it's a slap in the face professionally because it clearly isn't doing what it's supposed to be doing.

Personal control. Michelle then talked about her experiences with her perception of personal control over her job:

> You know, I've always felt that I had a lot of personal control over what I do on a daily basis. But as we talked about earlier, I really think that goes along with the job of being in the arts. Music, art, whatever, we really don't get a whole lot of intrusion from the powers that be. And I really like that and I don't know if I could deal with it if it were any other way. And that's true here too. I guess one of the downsides is the fact that when you have such an open . . . such a long leash, sometimes you feel like everything rides on you. You know what I mean? You're given a blank check to do whatever it is you want to do so you better get it right. And I don't know if that's a fair thing to say. For instance, if a couple kids are disengaged and a behavior problem, it can be really easy to say, 'This is

> all my fault for not doing a better job with the class,' because you have been given the power to do what you want. But in reality, things like that are, more often than not, stuff that really isn't solely your fault. But you put it on yourself because you should be doing better. And I think that openness creates a situation where we are too hard on ourselves for things that go wrong and probably don't give ourselves enough credit for things that go right.

I then asked Michelle to talk about how she felt concerning areas where she had felt little or no control and was forced to comply with mandates:

> You know, for the most part, those areas can range from being apathetic to really hating it. I can't actually think of any area that I'm forced to comply with that I'm ecstatic about. And it's not to say that [all the mandates] are horrible because they aren't. And some of the things are necessary and if we weren't forced to do them, they wouldn't get done. I guess what really separates the ones that I acknowledge from the ones that I can't stand depends on how useful they are. If something has to get done, it has to get done. I get it. But the ones that we have to do for the sake of doing, those ones piss me right the hell off. And there are plenty out there that we do and I'm like, "What the hell am I doing this for?"

Dealing with stress. I then asked Michelle to describe how she dealt with the stress she experienced from the work environment:

> Well, you know I'm a yoga teacher so I find myself doing a lot of calming exercises and breathing whenever I start to feel that stress coming on. But you know, sometimes that isn't enough. Sometimes I feel like the only way to deal with the stress is to get away from it. Just leave and realize that, whatever needs to get done, will have to wait because I'm not ready to deal with it at this point. I also have my husband and coworkers who are always good at lending an ear so that I can vent when I need to. That's what I love about going out on Fridays. We can just hang out and let off steam together. I think that's been super important for me and a lot of others as well.
>
> But I guess the truth of the matter is that the stress never really goes away. You just learn to deal with it. When it gets too much, we all have our little tricks to help us get away from it. But I think more than anything, we learn to live with it. It's almost part of the job and something that we sign up for when we choose to become teachers, you know? You might not know it when you start but it's something that you learn about as you go.

Teacher 4 (Emily)

Educational philosophy and beliefs. Emily was a fifth-year English teacher who had spent the past three years teaching at a charter school in Los Angeles. Emily's desire to become a teacher had not been present until an unexpected experience during her time attending community college:

> During my two years in community college I got a job tutoring middle school and high school students in my area. [During that time] I had an eighth grade student that couldn't comprehend readings that were far below his grade level, a tenth grader who couldn't multiply, and a twelfth grader that struggled with basic fractions. Since I was bussed to Porter Ranch and Granada Hills for middle and high school, I had no idea such educational disparity existed. I didn't think it was fair then, I don't think it's fair now. I figured as a teacher I'd be able to make a difference and positively influence youth to achieve more and overall be more.

Emily then discussed where she found the greatest satisfaction from being a teacher:

> Effective teaching leads to students growing as critical thinkers, creative bodies, and responsible adults. Being part of that process is a privilege. When they really understand the meaning behind lessons and they apply their skills to the real world, watching them succeed is a reward.

Emily was then asked to discuss her teaching philosophy. She highlighted the need to combat dangerous misconceptions that students may bring into the classroom:

> My teaching philosophy is, "Progress over perfection." I think schools and parents alike raise kids to be perfectionists; kids end up seeking high scores versus the knowledge that will result from them. They feel like their scores reflect who they are as individuals and that's so inaccurate. I design my curriculum to be rigorous; I maintain high expectations while providing high support to challenge students. It's about making progress to get to where you want to be or need to be. Mistakes are going to happen. We learn from them, and then we know better next time. I mean, that's what happens in life. If we prepare and try to be perfect, life itself doesn't always reward us, but that's what gets taught. I want to try to help students learn that progress is the true goal and that through continued progress they will find success.

When asked about how she saw the general purpose of education, Emily considered it to be simply about asking questions and learning:

> Education is about seeking answers to things we don't understand. In a way, its purpose is making us realize we are insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but we can learn a lot about what interests us, and we have the capacity to learn even if we aren't interested. As teachers, our job is to help students realize this and give them the tools to help them as they continue to grow as people.

Dissatisfaction

Administration. Emily had experienced extreme dissatisfaction with her administration. She began by detailing how her values as an educator seemed to be at odds with the school leadership:

> Administrative support? Do those two words go together? For teachers you say? Hmm. . . . I don't know about that. Just kidding. Sorry. It's just that administration at my site as a whole is pretty nonexistent unless they're emailing about ADA or stuff that concerns the budget. They even cancelled professional development because of budget. If that doesn't say we care more about money than our teachers as educators or providing an "authentic" education, I don't know what will.
>
> Instead of PD, we had to work on recruiting students. I literally called previously enrolled youth asking if they were interested in returning to school. Seriously. I did not go through academia to be a telemarketer. It was never a part time job and I mean, I'm not huge on calling out. I barely call my own mother and she gave birth to me. Needless to say it was both embarrassing and infuriating. Like, "Hi! Remember us? We're a desperate school you once attended. You're probably not ready for school as you haven't tried enrolling yourself, but that's okay. Come back because we need your attendance for money."
>
> I'm really surprised they didn't arrange a low budget alternative. A huge part of what makes PD a success is just us getting together to talk. Usually the question gets asked, "How was PD?" Whenever there's a positive response, it usually has to do with getting to see everyone. For me I get excited thinking about [the ability to be] close to 20 teachers in the same subject area, with years of experience, all together talking about best practices or things that didn't pan out. I want to get new ideas about what I should take into consideration, what I should avoid, or what I should incorporate in my own teaching.

Emily also discussed frustration with the ways in which administration attempted to develop teachers through their formal observation process:

> Sure, we have to send in our [end of the grading period projects] and syllabi for feedback, but we don't exactly get feedback. At first we sort of did. We received question after question after question. I imagine these were supposed to be thought provoking questions meant to help us think critically. I don't have time to answer all those questions and fix

> what may not even be implemented. I mean, things change all the time. Why should I be working so hard to detail something that is 4 months away and will probably change by the time we get there? All those questions—that's a strategy teachers use to get students to critically think about something and engage in more thoughtful responses. I want to just tell [my administrator] to cut it out. I've given you what I think the answer is in now what I'm looking for from you is for you to help me take the next step. It's not that I haven't put the time and effort into doing the best I can. But as the administrator, you're supposed to be able to give me ideas where to take it. Just asking questions doesn't help me. If I already knew the answer I would have given it. Please just tell me what would make it better or kindly suggest something else. I feel like it's a stupid technique that they use because they don't know what else to say, which is probably more true than anything. Anyways, getting feedback for the [projects] and syllabi ended a while ago. Now we just turn it in and that's that. I guess I'm okay with that because it was pretty meaningless to begin with. I mean, it must've been since she stopped giving us feedback.

Salary. Emily next discussed her experience with salary:

> When you see "English Teacher" and the annual salary, it's competitive on paper but when you break down what the job entails, it's awful. I have five preps including independent studies. Five. Five separate stacks of five separate curriculums to grade, each growing, Monday through Friday. When people ask me what I teach, I say English to save my breath and dread the follow up, "What grades?" question. The answer is just a reminder of what I have on my plate.

Emily also discussed the time that the school gives its teachers off during the year:

> Vacation includes one month for summer, one week for winter, and one week for spring. That's less than LAUSD or any school on a semester system. One month is not a lot of time to recover from the school year and pursue professional development opportunities. The school run PD honestly lacks quality and is more of a headache to attend than anything. There's not enough guidance or support with content. There's nothing like wasting time that we could be using to recuperate or use to find and attend professional development for ourselves. And while I'm thinking about it, we really can't anything else for that matter. I sure can't teach summer school because our schedule runs into all summer schools' schedules. There's no time to decompress in the way we need to do. And almost any teacher will tell you how important decompressing is.

Workload. I asked Emily to expand a bit on the workload that she had mentioned as she discussed salary:

> Having five completely different preps a day is just so much. It's the grading that really gets to me. I have five classes that average about twenty students each. They are all completely different so that means I have to plan separate lessons for each class for each

day of the week. That also means that the work they turn in is completely different too. So when I have stuff due, it's just so much to grade.

Let's look at this realistically. With five classes, I have around 100 assignments to grade on any given night. And I'm an English teacher so those assignments almost always include writing and revisions. If I want to do a good job on correcting a 3 paragraph response, we're probably looking at five to seven minutes per student, which is probably way faster than it would take in reality. But let's play with five to seven minutes for now. Not too bad right? But multiply that by 100 students and now you are looking at 500 to 700 minutes to get through a single stack. Seriously? 700 minutes? That's what, almost 12 hours? And on top of that I have meetings, planning for the next day, extracurricular activities, and a life outside of school to live. Or do I?

Colleague interaction. I then asked Emily to discuss her experiences with colleague interactions:

> It's hard to get to know my colleagues. We all live far apart and are at different points in our lives. It's difficult to bond because we have to rush home, and it's difficult to plan stuff for that same reason . . . When they're at the site it's obvious they care, but once students are let out, it's another story. That's caused a lot of tension. Half of them are using [the job] as a stepping stone, but right now in the here and now, we still have a job, and unfortunately it's a given that school hours are not the only hours you work. So there're some problems about some teachers feeling like their counterparts aren't putting in the necessary work.

Mandated conditions. Emily's discussion of mandated conditions revolved around the framework for curriculum that was used at her school. The way in which curriculum was delivered was developed by a small group of teachers who were considered an extension of the administration. The framework was detailed in a manual that all teachers had been given. This manual supposedly detailed how teachers in the organization were to build their curriculum:

> The manual isn't enough. It's like the shape matching game meets Lego. There's no step-by-step instruction. What we do has to fit our lessons to the criteria and the final result of using it should be effective teaching that is well understood and amazing, supposedly. But it's so abstract… and makes me feel more like the little teacher that couldn't make a great lesson even though I have this great tool. Instead of feeling confident I'm not, and that's so disconcerting. My only comfort is knowing I'm not alone in my feelings about the manual. It's a huge complaint from all the teachers at the school, so much so that the common response when anything involves the manual is a series of shrugs and eye rolls.

> This great tool that we have been given seems to not be so great after all. That word, "great." I don't think it means what they think it means.

Personal control. Emily's discussion of personal control revolved around the feeling of how her independence was actually a source of stress:

> I have a lot of autonomy but I don't feel like I have enough direction. When I think about getting a job elsewhere I know I'll miss the autonomy most, but not having enough direction makes me feel like I'm not being effective, and that paradox of having control and not having direction chips away at me. I want to feel like I am being successful to a certain degree. With no accountability standards and nothing coming from the administration, it's easy to feel like you're working without a purpose. You're just doing to do. It can be hard to feel like you're doing a good job because you get lost in the daily grind. You can't really see what you're doing well and what is going wrong or right. And trust me, it feels like a lot goes wrong often. I guess that's just me being hard on myself but that's the only measure that I have. I mean, there is literally no accountability or expectations.

Dealing with stress. Lastly, Emily discussed how she has chosen to deal with the stress of her working conditions:

> I don't deal with work stress well. I try to sleep it off when I can. Sometimes I sleep more than I should, and feel worse because I don't have enough time to get enough work done. Usually I'll take a nap when I get home, then wake up and work, then wake up and work again. I'm constantly tired, constantly drained, constantly feeling behind. Sometimes I deal with the stress by eating whatever and will put on five to ten pounds, easily, then crash diet from fear of students asking if I'm pregnant. I'm getting to that point where I'm just putting on more and more weight and accepting this is really what it is, though. My mom has been trying to cram healthy food down my throat so at least I'm healthy. . . . If only healthy food tasted as good as unhealthy food and were as affordable, I'd be a lot happier about it. So, other than being a bear, venting helps too, but I limit that since I end up sounding like a broken record. Things haven't really changed over the years.

Teacher 5 (Betty)

Educational philosophy and beliefs. Betty was in her 15th year of teaching art. She had spent 14 of those years at her previous school and had just made the change the school where the interview took place. Betty began her interview by discussing why she had wanted to become an educator:

[I had done] everything from working behind the counter at a gym folding towels, to bartending, to tutoring kids after school in art. And also as an assistant at a Montessori school. And I enjoyed that and I really liked it, but I never really thought about, 'I'm going to be a teacher, that's what I'm going to do.' I wanted to be a designer; I wanted to do one million different things. I wanted to work for Marvel, I wanted to be an interior designer, I wanted work in a museum . . . But a lot of [these jobs] somehow got me into a classroom and got me with kids and those are the ones I really liked. When finally I thought about it and I had to figure out what I wanted to do with myself, I was sort of floundering . . . I don't really like working with adults that much, you know? I find adults to be childish and not as cute. And I just, I didn't like the political stuff going on at the museum where I was; I was at the Smithsonian. I thought that I just had such a wonderful experience at [a school I had worked at]. It was so creative. I was in the upper school department where everyone was just kind of sharing ideas and kids were thinking outside the box and all the kids were really interested in creating fantastic projects. You walk up to the hallway and kids are playing guitar and like sitting down and it's like, "This is amazing." I want to work at a place like that. I think that's what I want to do, I think I want to be a teacher, I think I could do a really good job. I've been told by people that I'm really good at explaining things, you know? And so I went back to school and became a teacher.

Betty then discussed the aspects of teaching art she found most rewarding, with respect to her students:

The connections that I make with students I find incredibly rewarding. The high-level conversations that I can have with kids and that they learn something new. And for me, sharing something that I already love but also learning something new at the same time. For example, I just found out that couple weeks ago that it's quite possible that Van Gogh was murdered and he didn't kill himself. We all watched the video [by] 60 minutes and [I] had a great discussion with the students after class just about that whole thing. And to me, that moment is what I like about teaching. I share my passion but also I'm in a place to learn more about it too.

Betty then detailed what she was trying to accomplish as a teacher by discussing her teaching philosophy:

So I was always pretty much a square peg trying to figure out how to fit into the circle. And I think that the art room always has a tendency to . . . It's where the square peg can kind of hangout and not have to figure out how to fit into any circle. And I think my philosophy is trying to maintain an atmosphere in my classroom that is safe, where the kids feel like they have a safe place, where they can express themselves or at least experiment with different mediums and it doesn't have to be necessarily successful. You know, they just have to want to be there and try. [I also want to] have that place where

> people can freely exchange ideas about the things we are talking about, whether they agree or disagree and from there other things might stem from that.

Betty also discussed how her teaching philosophy had been altered by working in a school that had different expectations for education than she did. She had been forced to figure out how to blend her philosophy while also meeting the school's expectations:

> And working at [my previous school] for 14 years, it was really whipped into me that there needed to be a very particular product that evolved from my classes. And I thought we're not here necessarily to create products. And they would actually shoot down my collaborative assignments. And I had just come out of a grad school with collaboration, collaboration, collaboration. You know, you have to collaborate, the kids have to collaborate. . . . And I get to a school where they're like, "We don't want you to do this collaborative project because which child is going to take it home? How are we going to hang it on the wall?" That was their concern. Not the experience. What was the product? What the end result? What do we see from it? It took me many years to really understand how to create, how to balance artistic freedom with getting out a final product that is actually going to make the students satisfied as well. Because if the student hates their product or thinks it's ugly, they might not want to continue. So you want to maintain that fine line of, "Don't give up, we can make a look great, you can be successful." That's really the realistic reason why you should be doing it, you know, not that the school needs it to happen this way. You're doing it hopefully more for the student so they can feel success [rather] than for the administration. You know you're walking a fine line so it took me a few years and now I've got it down.

Betty then talked about the purpose of education in general terms. Her discussion revolved around the need to create a safe environment so that children could be lifelong learners who understand how to navigate within society:

> Ideally the situation is that he is learning how to socialize with others, he or she. He is learning how to understand how to be part of a team or a group environment. Group dynamics, you know? For better or for worse. You're getting kind of a microcosm . . . You're hoping to get a microcosm of the society at large so [students] can survive outside of school. But you're also hoping that they're in a place of safety, which isn't necessarily true for some schools and also for outside. But education, what they're supposed to be getting, is an education on how to survive socially and education on how to ask questions. Hopefully they are being inspired and gaining more of a thirst to be lifelong learners. You know that's what's supposed to be happening. They are supposed to be not be ignoring things and knowing when they're to step up, you know. They are supposed to not just be watching. They are supposed to be learning from other people's mistakes. You

know, and making their own mistakes and then being forgiven for those mistakes, and then being allowed to move forward, but also wanting to move forward with the fresh step, you know? And that is was supposed to be happening.

Dissatisfaction

Administration. Understanding Betty's theoretical and philosophical ideals for what education should be, she then discussed areas where she has felt a level of dissatisfaction. Betty began her discussion of administrative dissatisfaction with her experiences from her previous school:

> They were seriously some of the worst managers I've ever worked for in my entire history of life. The administration at my last school really sucked the life juice out of the teachers. And not just teachers. The support staff, the other administrators, I've never seen so many walking dead, you know, on one campus that was outwardly groomed so nicely. And everyone looked so perfect and everything. But inside, it's a shell because everyone's afraid to lose their job. People had been told straight up that they are lucky to even have a job here. You know, you don't tell your teachers that. And quite frankly, the teachers are the face of the school so they are the ones giving you the reputation, they're the ones the kids see every day, they're the ones who . . . You treat your teachers the same way you treat your parents, you know?

Betty then discussed specific examples of how her administrators had created the environment that she had just described:

> First there was the art chair, very sweet man, wonderful ceramic artist. Terrible art chair. I just felt like he didn't want to do his job. He was basically just there. There was no direction, no leadership, nothing. It wasn't a horrible situation but one would think that if you're going to be the art chair, you'd actually do something.
>
> And then there was the headmaster. He was a very strange guy. Like, a really big drinker, big partier, a real chauvinist. Apparently he was a big screamer too. A lot of people were extremely intimidated by him, you know? My father had been like that so it didn't bother me too much. And you had to stay on his good side. So I think there was a feeling that so as long as you stayed on his good side, your job is safe. That obviously isn't the way a school should be run. That fear and intimidation tactic makes for a very uncomfortable working environment, you know? And you can see it on a lot of the staff who seemed to always be working in a state of constant vigilance, you know, in case they ever did anything that would be to his disliking. You really had to fight for things for a very long time to move baby steps. And you never knew where you stood and there was

always a very passive aggressive nature there and everyone was really afraid of the headmaster.

Finally there was another administrator I worked with that I really couldn't stand. She's good with the parents because she's incredibly passive aggressive but doesn't really tell you what you really need to hear. She tells you what you want to hear. And so, the parents love her, which is why she's been around for so long, because she kisses major ass. But she did not really support you and she definitely gave you no information and she didn't really do her homework. So you kind of have this mixture of feelings. On one hand, you know what she's telling you is total bullshit and on the other hand, there's this sense that the bullshit that she is telling you is coming from a place where . . . It's hard to describe. It's like she doesn't know what to do and that's why she has to placate people, you know? Like, a strong leader would have a vision and an idea of what they wanted and they wouldn't need to placate anybody. So, this garbage that she's feeding to us is a result of her not knowing what she wants to do or what she should do, I guess. So then when she placated us it was not only frustrating because we knew it was bullshit, but we also had a sense that she didn't know what she was doing.

Betty briefly compared those experiences with her current administrator whom she felt was an overall good leader.

If you're having a problem and you go to her, which I have, she's there to listen and to help you work through it's in a way that actually will work and in a way that makes sense. I can say things to her that I could never say to my old boss for fear that I be fired at the drop of a hat. There's something comforting about knowing that you can count on your administrator to be a source of support.

Salary. Betty then discussed her experiences with her salary and her dissatisfaction with her pay compared to her workload:

I don't know if other public schools are like [private and charter schools] but for the amount of money that you make compared to the time that you work is way off. So I think that teachers are grossly underpaid. I think that even though we get off two and a half months during the year, I think that the amount of time that we put in to prepping and making sure that everything is right more than makes up for that. We are underpaid.

Betty then used an online business as a way to explain why she believed teachers were being underpaid:

The amount of money we get paid for the amount of work and effort and all of the things that we're doing at one time . . . It's just all of the tasks. You know Task Rabbit? Task Rabbit is an online resource if you need anything done. For example, if you need

> someone to come in and vacuum your carpets or go to the store or run an errand for you, you pay them for the task, right? You pay them based off the number of tasks they complete. With the amount tasks that we fucking do in a day, we'd be billionaires on Task Rabbit, right? And I'm guessing that at other schools it's the same. It's just bam, bam, bam, bam, bam. . . .

Betty highlighted the importance of reasonable monetary compensation for the work that teachers did:

> If you have good teachers and want to retain them, first of all you have to compensate them. I'm not saying I was unhappy with my compensation [at this school]. That's not even what I'm saying. I didn't even know if they could afford me, you know? And I think [the principal] really reached out. But you have to make sure that we feel like we are getting paid at a fair rate. The more crap we have to put up with, the more we are going to feel like we are underpaid.

I then asked Betty if being paid a higher salary would somehow mitigate some of the dissatisfaction she encountered. Betty qualified her answer by speaking about the difficult first semester she was having:

> I didn't realize the hell and pounding I was going to take this year. So I'm like . . . I don't know. Yeah, if the school paid me another 20 grand, I would still dread my fifth [period]. Yeah, my fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh periods. Yeah, money wouldn't make any of those classes better and I still probably be as pissed off with what's going on in my classes no matter how much you paid me. But I think I'd be more likely to put up with it for a little longer or be more inclined to not whine and complain, right? If you're not going to pay teachers 70 grand a year starting salary if they have a Masters, then you know, you better not kill them physically throughout the day. And mentally.

Workload. I next asked Betty to discuss her views on the amount of work that she had to complete in order to run her classroom. Dovetailing with her experiences concerning salary, Betty first spoke about her observations of other teachers at her school:

> [The school day] has been literally knocking teachers out. When there are teachers crying throughout the school day on a weekly basis, then something has to be figured out because it's not just the students. You know, the amount of work is just too much sometimes. And a lot of times we just don't know how to deal with it. Even the veteran teachers can be easily overwhelmed. I know I have been many times this year.

I asked Betty to discuss experiences of being overwhelmed with work. She began by discussing the first school where she had worked:

> I had almost 200 students that I taught at my last school, right? And I was burning out at one point. That is when I told them that I am going have to not be teaching sixth grade. I'm going to stick with my seventh and eighth grade classes and I'll teach all of the lower school, but I can't teach sixth grade. Because I was the only teacher teaching 200 students. Now with those 200 students, I had to mount every piece of artwork, I had to write paragraphs for grades. . . . I mean it was like too much. When you teaching 200 students. . . . No I wasn't teaching 200, I was teaching almost 300 students. So I put my foot down and I got it down to 250, right? So I would see them throughout the day at different times depending on what day it is, but I wouldn't have them back-to-back to back to back with no time in between. There was only one day where I had back-to-back five classes but I still had an hour and a half in the morning when I got to school just to set it up for the day, right?
>
> And then I come [to this school] and it's like, "I'm literally being fucking pounded." Like, my mornings are chill because I only have 17 in one class and I've got a really small upper school class of 10 and then I've got a break. And then it's tough. It starts. And it's fourth period, and then it's 5th period, and then it's 6th period, and then it's 7th period. . . . Always some fucked up personalities in there. You know? And just, I'm being pounded. Like I said, it's just bam bam bam bam. And it never seems to end. There's no escaping the work.

Colleague interaction. Betty then moved to discuss her interactions with her colleagues:

> So at my last school, everything was so uptight. Really uptight. You know it was such a big school and we had a lot of really conservative and judgmental people there. I find those two to often be combined. And then you also had people like me and other people there that didn't want to share too much, you know? You know, you want to keep it professional and you didn't want to be judged and so the social temperature there made it really difficult to get along with people. It was tough for you to really have very real experiences with people. In my 15 years there I did become close with some people. I still hang out with three or four people outside of school. One who is very close and one is becoming even closer. So there were some really good people there. It's just very difficult to let loose because it's such a fucking tight ass community. It's unbelievable. You know, it's unbelievable.
>
> And at my last campus, you know, my head of lower school, she used to talk shit on everyone. Like, somebody would leave the office as she was like, "Oh my God, blah, blah, blah. Did you know blah, blah, blah?"And don't think that she's not doing it about [everyone] when [they] leave. Just before you start laughing and getting in on it, don't think it's not about you as soon as you fucking leave here. And it creates a non-trusting undertone where you don't trust each other because you're not sure if you can walk out the door and not have people talk shit. And you think that they're judging you. It doesn't

> help you to be self-assured of yourself and your person, you know? And it's nasty. I don't like it. Like literally the first year I was there I started looking for another job because I felt that there. I felt very much judged and yucky there. And it wasn't a good fit. It's another place where I was a square peg, you know?

Betty compared those feelings to the school she was working at during the interview:

> There's just none of that here. I feel like I've never worked around people that are so genuinely themselves. And it's awesome that you are yourself and I am myself. And I am not going to judge you on that and I'm not going to talk shit because that's just not the way it's done here. You know what I mean? It's not clicky and I really like that. I genuinely like everybody here. I've never been able to say that, anywhere. You know? It's been a bit weird for me.

Betty then elaborated on the relationships that she had formed with her coworkers. She discussed how collegiality had been built outside of the school setting. The activity that she found to be the greatest source of bonding with her colleagues was going to bars on Friday afternoons:

> Sometimes there might be the idea that if you go to the bars, you're going there to drink to get drunk but it's not about that. It's about the camaraderie that is building among staff and the trust and that ability to show yourself as who you are as a person. And relax. You know, just relax. And run your mouth about the kids because we need to do that. And you know, funny stories, concerns, whatever. You know, it's about being a person and realizing that teaching is not simply a profession, it's far more than a profession. It's kind of . . . It's a very personal thing. So for us to step outside of that teacher aspect and be with each other in a place that allows us to talk and engage each other as normal people, that's very helpful and necessary. You really can connect to each other as people which goes a long way when it comes to having to work with each other in a professional setting. You know, there's no way I would know anyone as well as I have gotten to know them if we didn't take that time outside of work to get to know each other. I think that speaks to the staff here and how they value relationships with each other. It's definitely one of the core things [at this school] and I think it's made a huge impact on our ability to hang together as a staff when times get tough.

Mandated conditions. Betty then discussed mandated aspects of her job. She began by explaining how she had always fought to maintain a level of independence when it came to her curriculum:

> I've always had my curriculum be my curriculum. The only thing that I ever had to do at my last school was certain projects that were handed down to me because they had been

going on for many, many years. It took me years to phase those out but I eventually got them phased out. That was good because I was able to replace them with activities and projects that I wanted to do and thought were of value for my students. And, you know, I've never really felt a whole lot of pushback from administration as I created and did my curriculum. That's probably because there isn't a whole lot of knowledge in terms of art. So people didn't really talk to me because there was a lack of expertise about what I was doing. And I'm the expert so why would you argue with me, right? So that's good and I've always found that I have been able to do almost anything that I've wanted.

Betty then discussed a behavior management program that her school required all teachers to run and how it created strong feelings of dissatisfaction:

When I first saw the system, it was strange. You know one of the reasons that I actually even applied to the school was because there was something like a system of consistency here. My last school had a real problem with consistency. When dealing with students, there was this and this and that and then this . . . So when I saw this system, I was like, "Oh, that's what I'm looking for." And I looked it up and I couldn't quite get anything from the website and I was like, "I wonder . . . This could be great." Especially if I'm walking in to a public arena and the kids behavior is not fabulous. And so, I had really positive notions when I got here, right? And I didn't know what to make of the developer. I thought she was a weirdo but the jury was still out and I didn't really know what to make of her, right? But after living it these last few months, it's just . . . When you tell a group of your staff to, "Drink the Kool-Aid," that's never a good thing, right? That's telling people to not think, just do.

I was very uncomfortable at the beginning of school this year. I couldn't figure out why I wasn't comfortable as a teacher for the first month. And I've been teaching for years. I could do this with one hand tied behind my back, you know what I mean? Why was I uncomfortable? The real reason was because I wasn't myself. I was being told to be [the developer] and I'm not her. And I don't want to be her, I'm not comfortable being her. I've always bragged about the fact that my classroom is an organized chaos. That's been my stamp. That's what I've been told by my principals is awesome about my room is that there are 1000 things going on, but it's all totally organized. But she . . . Her rules turn it into a mess because it's now done in this procedural way that doesn't make sense for anyone but her.

So once I realized that I just decided that it's my classroom and I'm going to work it the way I used to work. You know, I still do some of the things because first, I was told to drink the Kool-Aid or leave and second, we have to have consistency throughout. Like I don't want to be that one teacher that I hear is like, "Well they're not doing it in [my] class." You know what I mean? But I finally realized that I'm not going to do this. I'll just be myself. And boy did that take a load off. So I threw away the [system] in a sense.

I believe in a methodology of doing things in the school. I don't believe in drinking the Kool-Aid. This methodology is very imperfect, and a perfect methodology

would be something that can be molded and shaped to your school's needs. Of course, I guess that would mean it's not exactly a methodology. That's where the system failed us.

Personal control. Betty was next asked about the level of personal control she felt she had over her job:

> You know, I feel like I've had a lot of control over the curriculum. I get to do the projects that I want in the way that I want and that's really important to me. I've never really had anyone telling me that I have to do this or that when it came to what I was teaching in my classroom. I guess the areas that I feel like I haven't had a whole lot of control and are areas outside of my classroom. When it comes to dealing with other teachers, administrators, or parents, a lot of that stuff can be handled in the way that I wouldn't necessarily want to handle it, you know? So it's weird. It's almost like as long as I keep my head down, I'm allowed to do whatever I like. You know, so long as I'm actually teaching and the students are learning. But when you try to stick your head outside your classroom or get something done at the school level, you know where other people are operating, that you find yourself really confined. It's kind of weird that way. I guess I feel like I have just enough control to keep me sane but I'm also always feeling the stress that comes from areas that I don't think that I have any control over. It's not that I can't control those things. It's more like I'm not being given the opportunity to control those things. And that can be really frustrating. And I know it's a balance between having your own level of independence and having to do what is expected of you. I just feel that the more control people are given over what they do for a living, the happier they seem to be.

Dealing with stress. After having an opportunity to discuss at all of the ways that she experienced dissatisfaction in the work environment, Betty was asked about how she dealt with the stress that accompanied the dissatisfaction:

> I take a deep breath, and I wait a minute. If it's dealing with anything, a student, an administrative decision, you know, whatever it is, I'll take a walk. My old campus used to be huge so I used to take a walk. I had the time to take a walk. Actually, I was so out of my head a few weeks back that I actually did take a walk across the street over to T.J. Maxx and bought a pair of jeans. If I need to, I'll also write an email. But I can sound gruff. I usually have to have someone proofread it. But [a coworker] told me a good one. She said just write the email but don't put the address in. Check in the morning or something and then send it if you want to.
>
> As far as dealing with stress that comes from communiqués and emails or whatever, I don't check my emails at night anymore. [I] don't check my emails at night and I don't check them on the weekends. Sometimes I do at night during the weekdays, but I do not check on the weekends anymore. My husband was like, “You're banned. . . banned.”

When I need a break I read the *Skim*, which is how I get my news. The *Skim* is written by women, pretty much for women, and it's just these two Ph.D. chicks who give you the news for you in their words. And it's great. It will say a funny comment about a story or just a funny quote of the day or something. That's where I can step away from being a teacher for a few minutes.

And I used to work out. Actually, I was a workout machine up until my daughter was born. I was definitely spinning five days a week, I was riding my bike everywhere, I was always working out. You know, I am exhausted, I don't know which way is up. I have such body issues in the last . . . Since [my daughter] was born and since I can't exercise anymore. And now I find myself heading to bars when I can to hang out with people that I like. But, you know, with the kid, there's only so much time that I can do that. And obviously I'd like to do that way more than I get to.

Teacher 6 (Ben)

Educational philosophy and beliefs. Ben was in his 7th year as an English teacher. He had taught for five years in New York before moving to Los Angeles. This was his second year at his current site. Ben started by discussing his path to becoming a teacher:

> Yeah, I guess the short answer to this is when I was studying abroad in London in my sophomore year in college, I was broke so I started tutoring for money. Because I was a native speaker, I could tutor Asian students in English because they were preparing to take British university entrance exams. I started tutoring them and teaching them in small classes of 6 to 10 students and loved it. I just fell in love with the profession. They were incredibly grateful and incredibly enthusiastic and I fell in love with it. It's probably the first time I actually considered it as a career. My mother was a teacher and my father is a lawyer and he taught law courses and they both really enjoyed the profession, the teaching aspect of it. So it wasn't a stretch for me to become involved in education in some way. After that I started considering it seriously and did a trial program in New York City called the New York City Teaching Fellows where they bring you in and pay for your salary and pay for your masters degree. They wanted a two to three-year commitment. I think it's a two and a half year commitment at least. I came in I loved it and stuck with the school where I started for five years and never looked back. I stepped away from it for a year before I moved out here but really missed it. I had considered going into a couple other fields but ended up really missing it so here I am.

Ben then talked about what he found most rewarding about being a teacher:

> I think seeing students really grow, which is a little bit more challenging in English because I don't think the progress is as defined as in math or science. But seeing them grow and hearing them express how much they've learned or how much their parents express how much they've learned and how much they appreciate the job you're doing. I

> think that's the most rewarding part. Hearing them come back years later and talking about how much they enjoyed your course and how much they learned from you and that some of the kids are in college now. You and I know as teachers, you see kids that you know were unskilled when you first met them and they walked away with a different knowledge body or skill set or something and that's . . . You note to yourself that they got it. That's rewarding.

Ben discussed his personal teaching philosophy as a desire to expose students to new experiences:

> You know I think my philosophy as a teacher is to expose. I want to expose students to good literature, to thinking about things in a different way that they might not have thought about before, to help them become better writers and understand what their writing means, to understand the importance of language in their lives and all of our lives, and the power that language has in our world. I think my philosophy is to give kids an opportunity to learn and to value, to value good writing, good literature, but also to value their own ideas and help become better thinkers.

I then asked Ben to discuss his opinion surrounding the purpose of education within society:

> Yeah, so I think in the whole field of education, we' re seeing a shift. Where once it was to provide kids with skills to enter into the workforce with industrialization and the common body of knowledge and so forth, this next generation of workers is going to be very different. I think we really need more critical thinkers; people who can adapt to a world that's going to be changing very rapidly. Education has an obligation to not only grow students as people, but also to make sure that those people are ready to enter and integrate into a larger society. I mean we can't forget the reality that our students will have to find jobs and earn a living and that school plays an integral role in that process. It's not to dismiss the role we have in building the moral and ethical aspects of students, but I think that it's important that we always remember that we will be sending our students into the real world to live and that we need to develop their thinking and their skill sets so they can be as successful as possible.

Dissatisfaction

Administration. The interview then moved into areas of dissatisfaction within teaching. Ben first started by discussing how he had appreciated his administrators at both of his schools:

> You know at the school now, I have a lot of autonomy about what to teach and don't have anyone breathing down my neck about lesson plans, which I think is great for me. I used

> have to turn in my lesson plans to my administrators at my old school. That free time is great to have because constantly having to do lesson plans and turn them in was a huge time commitment and it really didn't seem to have any real benefit for me. Especially now that I am a veteran teacher, having to do lesson plans is more of a chore than it is a beneficial activity. I feel that my time is much better utilized now that I'm freed up and that I can get more stuff done to make my classroom better. That's a big thing. I think that when the administration gives you certain amount of autonomy and treats you as a professional, it's rewarded. If they don't micromanage, they can get better results.

Ben then gave a counterexample of autonomy that came in the form of a system that was implemented at his school that he felt was incredibly micromanaging:

> I guess the perfect example of something that's the opposite of that would be [the system]. The biggest problem with the system is that it is micromanaging to the Nth degree. It's not even micromanaging, it's micromanaging times ten and that's the issue that I have with that. There's nothing wrong with the ideas that it is trying to integrate. In fact, the ideas are actually good ideas that should be implemented. But the way in which they are being fed to us and that they are so meticulous in how things are supposed to be done and that there is no other way that they can be done except in the way that is presented to us that makes them overbearingly difficult to deal with. And I imagine that's why we have a lot of resistance with it. I think it's safe to say that's the reason people have so many problems with them.

Salary. Ben spoke about the issue of salary and how it had played a role in his decision to continue to be a teacher:

> You know, seeing the payoff that [teaching] has, that translates into little motivation for me to put the time in and deal with the frustration that I encounter. If I didn't do things independently to make money, I don't know if I'd stay with the profession. I worked in New York and Los Angeles and they're two expensive places to live and in both places, teachers aren't necessarily granted social status. That's not what is driving these communities. You may find that in other communities, smaller communities, but these major cities find value in a lot of other things. For example, I had a great conversation with a girl in a bar in New York. Beautiful woman. She and I hit it off. Great chemistry and we were talking and she asked me what I do. I said I teach high school, I'm an English teacher and she turned to me and said, “This will never work,’ and walked away. And I think that was something I saw a lot of my friends struggle with, males in their late 20s who are teachers, because I think in New York they weren't the best paid or whatever . . . Your apartment is less than the other guys, your car is not as nice as the other guys. And obviously there are social components to that. You know, money is how the show we value things in society and it is a source of pride for most people. So it was rough and

> I don't know if I would really want to stay in teaching if it would be my sole income. Yeah, the money is not enough to make me stay.

Workload. Ben next discussed his experiences with his workload, which echoed the long hours discussed by other participants:

> My mentor teacher, from the start, told me, and she was a phenomenal teacher, a 40 year teacher in Brooklyn, she said, "If you want to be a good English teacher, you got to get comfortable with 3 AM." And that might be hyperbolic but . . . you know I work a lot and I spend hours on the weekends. I don't see my friends doing that. I always wished I had a job where I left it at work. For me, as an English teacher, I know that you can have a lot of work outside of school grading papers. I think for me this year, I've seen more work this year. I teach six classes. I teach [periods] one through six and I have my prep seventh and I feel like during the day I don't have a chance to do anything. And I've taught at a private school in England . . . They wanted you to have ample time to get your shit done. They knew that your happiness was imperative. And a lot of that happiness coincided with your ability to get your job done. And to get that job done, you needed enough time so you wouldn't have to take it home with you. I just feel like I have too many classes right now to do a really fantastic job. Like, I know our class sizes are small and you won't hear me complaining about that, especially compared to public schools. I've been fortunate to work at schools that have pretty small class sizes, relatively small classes but right now having six periods to teach with like, a 30 minute lunch and a 50 minute prep at the end of the day, which always gets burned up doing something else. It's just . . . Our day doesn't end till 4 o'clock. Even then, it's not really done.

Ben then discussed having an incredible amount of things that needed to be done daily:

> I think you are juggling so many balls as a teacher and you have this vision of like, just teaching. And there is so much more that goes into it in terms of the paperwork and the paper trails that you need to show. It just becomes a lot. It doesn't really end. I think it can be tough on us because our job never is quite done. You know, there's always something more that you can do to make your classroom better. But on top of that you also have IEP's, meetings, and for me, I really enjoy going down after school and playing basketball with students. But even though that's fun, that's still an hour or more that gets eaten up and there's always this lingering thought that you should be doing something else. It'd be real easy to stay until seven or 8 o'clock at night taking care of stuff. It can definitely get overwhelming at times.

Colleague interaction. Ben was next asked to discuss his experiences with peer interactions:

> You know, I think it's really important to have good relationships with colleagues. I think that in our school, you can see how powerful good relationships are. I think the new

> people at school this year have kind of taken that to the next level. And I think it's really good. You know, I enjoy hanging out with our staff and that bonding outside of school is really important for what happens inside. I think that our work relationships have been really positively influenced by what happens outside of school. There's something about appreciating a person outside of work that allows you to find value in working harder in school. I think our school is a place where we truly appreciate each other and that appreciation is kind of one of our foundational components to how the school runs. I think that has a powerful affect how well we work as a team. I mean, you can see it in our staff in the work environment. Yeah, so I think it's an awesome aspect of the school and I don't know if a lot of other environments have that kind of collegiality. I know at my old school we worked well as a team we had a lot of professional respect for each other but it doesn't compare to the feeling I get from the staff at here. You know, it's a young staff and so skill sets are still being developed and that nuts and bolts of how the school runs is still, you know, we're still finding our feet in that respect. But as far as working with these people, I couldn't be happier with my fellow teachers.

Mandated conditions. Ben was then asked to discuss experiences with any mandated programs or curriculum that had been expected of him. After briefly restating that he had significant independence at the two schools that he has worked for, he decided to discuss dissatisfaction with the system that had been implemented at his school:

> I understand the thinking behind it but it is stressful. But I've never seen teachers marching students up and down the hall because the students can't line up correctly. And they would spend the class period marching up and down the hall. The whole thing doesn't feel good.

I asked Ben to expand on what did not feel good about adhering the program:

> There's something about that feels tyrannical or feels. . . . It's the phoniness of the language. But the concept of the system seems logical so what's wrong with having it? Nothing, right? I don't know, sometimes I think it's the way it's packaged, I think it's . . . I'll be really honest with you, the manual has typos. Now people notice that right away. [The creator] is abrasive and inconsistent. She's late or unreliable. She's rubbed parents the wrong way. Both parents and children, actually. Therefore I think the whole package starts to feel not quite right. I think those things definitely factor into it.
>
> Like if you had people behind it that you could really look up to and the way that they helped parents and the way they help teachers and the way they help students and the way they carry themselves was really reliable and responsible, I think we all would have a different feeling about the system. But unfortunately, that's not the case. In fact, it's almost the exact opposite of what I just said.

> I think the other problem is that a lot of us feel that it's asking us to be something that we're not. Like, if you follow the system, you not being true to yourself. And I think [the creator] did some good things with it when she was a teacher so she's packaged it and tried to sell it. But I don't think it's for everybody, and so . . . You know I don't know what to do. I think we're doing a lot of good things in the classroom in spite of being forced to conform to the system and I try not to spend my energy on this topic, and that's my own survival technique.

Personal control. Finally, Ben was asked about how much personal control he felt he had over his job, a question to which he offered a bit more positive outlook than others participants in this study:

> I think I've overall had a really good experience with having a lot of personal control over what I want to do my classroom. Administrators and mentors have given me the opportunity to explore what I want to do and how my want to teach. I've never really had any one pressing down on me too hard. You know, I know this may not be true of a lot of teachers in a lot of settings and I know that I'm lucky to have worked in the schools that I have. I really like that I can run the classroom in the way that I want to run it and I get to choose the content and the methods to deliver my content. In that sense, I have total freedom. Of course there are things that I have to do because someone or something mandates it. But I find, in most cases, that I can work around it and I'm pretty good about not letting things get to me so it's not too much of a problem. So yeah, I say that I have a lot of personal control and that I like it a lot. You know, I know this interview is about dissatisfaction so I will say that I'm not quite sure how I would handle an environment that isn't as open as the ones that I have worked in. I try not to let things get to me but I know that there are many situations in education were I probably would be very frustrated if I had to work in them. So I consider myself lucky and I make sure that I do the most with the freedom that I've been given.

Dealing with stress. Finally, I asked Ben about how he dealt with any stress that encountered as a teacher:

> Well, like everyone here, I have my own ways of dealing with it. I guess the main ways I handle stress is by doing activities that I enjoy. You know, I really love surfing and music. I always make sure I have make time to do those things. That's important, you know? You have to build in time for yourself or the stress will eat you up. I also enjoy playing sports with the kids on Thursdays after school. So yeah, for me it's about making sure that I maintain that life outside of school. Do the things that I want to do. It definitely can be difficult at times and sometimes work can get in the way but I just make sure that I make sure I avoid letting work conflict with my personal life as often as possible.

Interview 2

Interview two asked participants to discuss my analysis of their shared experiences as they related to alienation. Their responses to the second interview are detailed in Chapter 5. This was done for two reasons. First, the teachers were responding to how I connected alienation to their narratives. It is necessary to understand how I chose to apply alienation to identified dissatisfying conditions in order to make sense of their responses. Second, another goal of this study was to discuss how empowerment may mitigate alienating conditions. The process of the second interview not only validated the connection between alienation and dissatisfying conditions, but it also proved to be an empowering experience for the participants. As such, it made sense to present their responses while discussing the larger role empowerment plays as a means to addressing dissatisfaction and alienation within the educational work environment.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided a rich presentation of the insights and perspectives of six teachers with respect to their labor and the struggles that shaped their everyday life in the classroom. Given the strong narrative component of this study, the decision was made to allow their voices to tell the stories of their experiences of teacher dissatisfaction and teacher alienation by engaging many of the factors identified by the literature. Chapter 5 provides analysis of the narratives in relationship to the literature and how their voices can help us to better understand the question of teacher alienation.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS

Overview

Chapter 5 analyzes the teachers' narratives in order to better understand their conditions of dissatisfaction as well as to ascertain if alienation was present. This chapter is divided into three types of analysis. The first analysis connected experiences expressed within the teacher narratives and linked them with teacher dissatisfaction. The second analysis engaged the relationship of alienation to experiences teachers shared within their narratives. The final analysis engaged the literature surrounding alienation, in the context of the broad concept of teacher dissatisfaction, to discuss more fully the impact of alienation on the educational working environment.

Analysis of Teacher of Dissatisfaction

The goal of this section is to confirm that the teachers' shared experiences of dissatisfying working conditions echo those described in the literature. The current research surrounding teacher dissatisfaction, however, seldom offers structural or systemic explanations connecting the various debilitating conditions teacher encounter. This constitutes an underlying concern in this discussion on teacher dissatisfaction. This study, in many respects, illustrates how alienation forms a structural connection absent within traditional discourse on dissatisfaction. In order to illustrate this point, teachers' narratives must be first linked to the literature on teacher dissatisfaction to show that the data collected in this research is indeed synchronized to what other forms of research would designate as teacher dissatisfaction. As a result, a direct link can be created between individual experiences shared in the narratives and the literature-supported

categories of dissatisfaction. Once the narratives of participants have been linked to the main categories of dissatisfaction, the following sections will engage alienation identified within the narratives and, ultimately, assert the importance of understanding the impact that alienation has on broader categories of teacher dissatisfaction. With this in mind, each of the common categories associated with teacher dissatisfaction was analyzed by using a composite analysis of the teachers' narratives to identify common themes.

Administration

School culture. Shared experiences from the narratives dealing with administration illustrated the importance of the teacher-administrator relationship and how it played a critical role in a teacher's ability to experience satisfaction. Teachers in this study highlighted two main concerns with administration. First, they acknowledged that poor administrators could be a serious detriment to the overall culture of the school site. Teacher statements alluded to how important it was for teachers to perceive their administrators as having the ability to effectively carry out their job and meet leadership expectations (Salas et al., 2004). Those administrators who were perceived as unable to carry out tasks in an efficient or logical manner were seen as engendering a lack of confidence in their subordinates (Marsh, 1994). Participants noted that administrators who embodied these negative traits tended to be incapable of supporting them as they carried out their jobs. Julie, for example, noted how important it was for staff that administrators be able to set the tone and direction of the school:

> I don't need you to love me, I don't need you to take me under your wing. I don't need to be your family. I just need you to do your job because I'm trying the best to do mine. And I just need you to speak clearly with me. As my administrator, you're supposed to set the direction and protect your staff. That's part of your job. And to offer us guidance and lead us when we need to be led. You need to know what is necessary and deliver it when it is needed.

The second theme revolved around how administrators appeared to lack professional courtesy and respect for the teaching staff. In the narratives, the absence of this quality almost always engendered feelings of frustration and resentment among teachers. Betty noted how the use of fear seemed to be a calculated tactic that her administrator used as a way to keep teachers submissive:

> The administration at my last school really sucked the life juice out of the teachers. And not just teachers, the support staff, the other administrators, I've never seen so many walking dead, you know, on one campus that was outwardly groomed so nicely. And everyone looked so perfect and everything. But inside, it's a shell because everyone's afraid to lose their job. People had been told straight up that they are lucky to even have a job here. You know, you don't tell your teachers that. . . .

This example highlighted the way in which administrators created and potentiated environments that produce underlying stress and frustration among the school staff. It supports Marsh's (1994) concerns about how damaging unresolved conflict between teachers and administration can be to a teacher's level of satisfaction.

Support

Effectiveness. Brownell et al. (1997) have explained how failure to counteract the causes and effects of perceived detrimental working conditions is a source of frustration reported by many teachers in the field. The participants is this study often recalled times when they asked for support from their administrator but did not receive the assistance they were seeking. Many noted that administrators who tended to be finicky with their support also generated high levels of stress among the staff. Julie noted that she could never predict what kind of or how much assistance she was going to receive when she requested it:

> [Students] would have emotional explosions and you'd send them out. And it was not crazy, "Oh my god, so-and-so is in huge amount trouble." Sending someone out for stuff like that was fairly common. They get sent out to the counselor or to the administrator.

> And you would call her and say, “Can I send so-and-so to you [because] they have done X, Y or Z,"”and she would [say], “No, I already have a student in here and my office is kind of small.” And this is after [I] told student they were going and then it's like, “Never mind.” She would say, “I can't right now.” Yeah. Anyways that was a really . . . that gave me stress dreams because that totally took all of the power. My credibility [as a teacher and authority figure] was just shot after that.

Beyond being frustrated for being denied assistance when it was requested, Julie felt she also experienced feeling like she had lost credibility with her students. Abel and Sewell (1999) have argued that any conditions that can lead to poor student-teacher relationship can be major sources of stress for teachers. Administration plays a key role in being able to support their teaching staff as they carry out their job. Teachers in this study acknowledged that administrators could often be overwhelmed, but felt that, as leaders of a school site, they need to be able to respond appropriately when guidance and support were necessary. In fact, the participants, as a group, saw this as the central role of school leadership.

Expectations. Another source of teachers feeling like they were not supported became apparent when the participants described how administration was unable to fulfill teacher expectations concerning standard administrative practices. The disconnect between what the administration was doing and what the teachers expected from their administration created an enormous rift in the teacher-administrator relationship. In her narrative, Emily detailed how she believed administration was failing to support her when it came to her growth and development. She believed that a fundamental component of being an administrator was giving support to teachers in the form of feedback from observations, constructive critique of unit plans, tips on classroom management, and so forth. She expressed the feeling that the administration at her school had proven themselves unable to carry out a seemingly standard practice in the following way:

> Sure, we have to send in our [end of the grading period projects] and syllabi for feedback, but we don't exactly get feedback. At first we sort of did. We received question after question after question. I imagine these were supposed to be thought provoking questions meant to help us think critically. . . . All those questions, that's a strategy teachers use to get students to critically think about something and engage in more thoughtful responses. I want to just tell [my administrator] to cut it out. I've given you what I think the answer is in now what I'm looking for from you is for you to help me take the next step. It's not that I haven't put the time and effort into doing the best I can. But as the administrator, you're supposed to be able to give me ideas where to take it. Just asking questions doesn't help me. If I already knew the answer I would have given it. Please just tell me what would make it better or kindly suggest something else. I feel like it's a stupid technique that they use because they don't know what else to say, which is probably more true than anything.

In their work, Bays and Crockett (2007) noted the high risk for dissatisfaction and frustration that accompany teacher-administrator relationships when the two parties have conflicting priorities or expectations. Teachers who were unable to have what they felt were reasonable expectations met tended to show high indicators of stress and frustration. Administrations who were unable or unwilling to explain their actions, or lack thereof, only compounded the issue. According to the literature, this absence of communication leaves teachers in a state of confusion (Hargreaves, 1994) and can lead to frustration as their expectations go unfulfilled (Arnold et al., 1998).

Overbearing. Conversely, administrators who micromanaged their staff were also sources of high levels of dissatisfaction. Teachers in this study described administrators who were perceived to have too much control over staff activities as stifling and oppressive. The narratives usually described how administrators would force their staff to engage in activities that held little or no value. Similarly, Holland (2004) has noted how the intense bureaucratic nature of school environments were often viewed as limiting factors for teacher satisfaction. Ben, for example, described the ways in which he was required to turn in daily lesson plans. The

amount of time necessary to create a hard copy of a lesson plan was not equal to its impact on the class and he felt that time used during the creation of a lesson plan could have been better utilized:

> Especially now that I am a veteran teacher, having lesson plans is more of a chore than it is a beneficial activity. I feel that my time is much better utilized now that I'm freed up and that I can get more stuff done to make my classroom better . . . I used have to turn in my lesson plans at my old school. That free time is great to have because constantly having to do lesson plans and turn them in was a huge time commitment and it really didn't seem to have any real benefit for me.

This experience highlighted the idea that administrative attempts to micromanage teachers can create a high-risk condition for generating teacher frustration (Salas et al., 2004). Ben stressed that if an administration trusted its teachers to be capable and motivated, it would be rewarded with hard work and a positive educational work environment. In this context, micromanaging represented deskilling of teachers, which only served to generate a deep sense of dissatisfaction and resentment (Hargreaves, 1994).

Competence. Another concern with administration came in the form of teachers' perception of leader competence and professionalism. Participants highlighted numerous instances where interactions between administrators and teachers ended with disagreements or confusion. Accordingly, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) noted that the lack of ability for administration to carry out clear actions that build school vision, develop goals, and offer support for developing a collaborative culture was usually a strong source of teacher dissatisfaction. Over and over again, teachers in this study detailed how they could not follow the reasoning of their superiors and, thus, could not rationalize or comprehend administrative actions. From classroom observations to organizational decision-making, participants were often unclear about what their administration was trying to accomplish and where staff were supposed to play a role in the

organization's goals. The lack of administrative skill to properly meet these needs was highlighted as David spoke about dealing with an administrator during a classroom observation:

> A lot of [what we do] seems to be driven by [the assistant principal's] personal interests and ideals as it relates to education. To me . . .. it was sort like a slap in the face because of how incapable she is, or at least I think she is. The assistant principal seems to have an agenda about a whole lot of things and we're forced to follow her.

Communication. It was important to note how often participants associated a loss of confidence in their administrators when they perceived those administrators as possessing poor communication skills. This is in concert with the literature, which has shown that in the absence of strong communication skills, administrations risk creating a deep divide or barrier between themselves and their teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). In her narrative, Betty described her administrators as people who were unable to communicate ideas in a straightforward and honest manner. Participants usually used terms such as "passive aggressive" and "placating" to describe how these administrators operated. Poor communication skills were also attributed to administrators when they did not seem to have a clear direction or vision for the school and staff. As illustrated by the literature, when the administration continues to show a lack of direction and goals for the school, as evidenced by their inability to effectively communicate, a sense of frustration leads to a loss in confidence in the competency of the school leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

No shared direction. Continuing with the importance of communication, teachers in this study felt that poor communication often led to having to figure out and address problems on their own. Poor communication often left teachers without clear direction and forced them to rely on their own decision-making process, which was often based on insufficient information to carry out their job to satisfactory standards. Unfortunately, many of these decisions revolved

around aspects of the work environment where there had been some sort of expectations set by the administration but without the adequate guidance or support. In these cases, frustration stemmed from ambiguity resulting from poorly communicated ways to reach these goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). In the narratives, the teachers had expressed having a vague conception of educational goals but were unable to fully comprehend how administration wanted them to carry out the identified goals. Participants also explained how the problem of poor communication continued to impede progress even after problems had been identified. Emily, for example, discussed a poorly written curriculum framework that failed to provide teachers sufficient direction:

> The manual isn't enough. It's like the shape matching game meets Lego. There's no step-by-step instruction. What we do has to fit our lessons to the criteria and the final result of using it should be effective teaching, well understood and amazing, supposedly. But it's so abstract . . . and makes me feel more like the little teacher that couldn't make a great lesson even though I have this great tool. Instead of feeling confident I'm not, and that's so disconcerting. My only comfort is knowing I'm not alone in my feelings about the manual. It's a huge complaint from all the teachers at the school, so much so that the common response when anything involves the manual is a series of shrugs and eye rolls. This great tool that we have been given seems to not be so great after all.

In this case, the inability for administration to effectively communicate its ideas about how curriculum should be built and delivered created frustration as Emily had to fill in the gaps, even though she felt she did not have the necessary tools to effectively do so. Her frustration matches that of teachers who work in a constant state of guardedness when unable to make sense of school culture and norms (Borman & Dowling, 2006). The longer teachers are left in a state where they are unsure about how to proceed to reach prescribed or sanctioned goals, the more likely they are to become dissatisfied with the working environment. In Emily's example, the

administration became a bureaucratic force that was unable to establish an effective educational environment, thus becoming a limiting condition that generated dissatisfaction (Holland, 2004).

Conflicting goals. In their narratives, teachers expressed how administration can also have differing goals from that of their teaching staff. It is well known that administration must answer to multiple entities, much like their subordinates. As they try to satisfy the demands placed on them by positions of higher power, it is possible that their goals begin to diverge from those of their teachers. Whether they are aware of it or not, when school administrators fail to properly negotiate any divide with their teachers, frustration and dissatisfaction are soon to follow (Salas et al., 2004).

Unfortunately, many of the teacher responses described experiences where they felt that the administration did not share the same goals as the staff. Ranging from issues of ADA to curriculum development and implementation, whenever teachers and administrators were on different pages, teachers exhibited high levels of dissatisfaction and frustration. While there were numerous examples of competing goals and priorities found within the narratives, Matt's discussion of his administration supporting the school's partners over the teachers best highlighted this problem:

> I also strongly believe that that's [the executive director's] strategy and that the strategy of the school so that the educators . . . can continue to [work towards] the agenda of our partner sites. [The intentional ambiguity is there] because [administration doesn't] want to help us mediate our way out of the conflict where someone is asking us to do something that's not within our pay grade or job description. So at the end of the day the [underlying motive is] about preserving and maintaining that business relationship where the connection is strongest between the charter and the executive directors of the [partner] programs and the teachers have no say in anything. We're very expendable.

Matt's example gave a strong indication of the importance of teachers and administrators having a shared understanding of goals. The narratives in the research point to teachers clearly feeling

dissatisfied when administrative goals were not in line with the goals of the staff. This is not to say that one set of goals is necessarily more important than another; it does, however, highlight the need for all stakeholders to have a clear and shared understanding of the goals that the organization is trying to achieve.

Predictability. Finally, teachers described the need for their administrators to be predictable. Predictability entails understanding how an administrator will react in a given situation. Not knowing where one stands within an educational organization can be a great source of stress and frustration (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Michelle discussed the frustration and uneasiness that accompanied unpredictable administrators:

> Maybe it is just the idea that you're living in a constant state of "I don't know what's going on." Even though it's not extreme and it's not going to destroy your classroom, it's just the feeling of, "I don't know, and that frustrates me that I don't know." It wasn't predictable. It was, "Well gosh [other teachers] didn't get that," so you start to second-guess yourself as a teacher. And you're like, "Gosh, I would really love to do that with my students, but I'm 90 percent sure I can't ask for it." Or "Oh God she's coming to observe me now. What is she looking for? Did I make my lesson plans the way she wants them? I don't really know."

Borman and Dowling (2006) have stressed that predictability allows teachers to feel a level of comfort due to being able to understand the goals and direction that leadership has established through effective communication. By understanding the shared goals and direction, as well as how each member of the environment plays a role in pursuing those goals, a teacher is able to be in a better position to be effective in the classroom and school community.

Salary

Much in line with Ingersoll and Smith's (2003) research, salary was a major concern for many the teachers in the interview process. Most teachers discussed the need to be able to live out their future lives with a reasonable level of comfort and they were concerned with the ability

to do so on a teaching salary. Similarly, Guarino et al. (2006) have pointed out that the level of salary strongly correlates with the retention of teachers. Most of the teachers in this study discussed how their current salaries were sufficient for living as a single person or with a significant other. The greatest concern, however, was the low ceiling at which teaching salaries capped out. Julie noted how the low salary ceiling would be insufficient for her to build the life she envisioned for herself:

> But I definitely know that there is a ceiling as a teacher as far a salary goes and that is a huge. Actually, I don't know if that's a huge because I don't think that the only thing keeping me from staying in teaching, actually. But that's definitely part of it. There is this notion where the whole idea of a teacher is that if you tell someone you're a teacher, they're like "Ooo, can you even go out to dinner with us tonight? Do you have any money?" I mean of course we do. But still, the fact that the ceiling is set so low. . . especially for the amount of work we do. I don't know. Like I said, it's not the only reason I'd leave, but the money sure isn't doing anything to keep me here either . . . I mean, I'm good now but to have to take care of a kid on this salary and live a life that I envision for myself? I can't see that happening. Oh god no.

Like Julie, Ben noted how his teaching salary was not sufficient and that he had to find supplemental sources of income. Without that extra income, he probably would not have continued teaching. However, Ben also noted how low teacher pay coincided with him feeling that he, as an educator, was not valued by society. Greenglass and Burke (2003) stated that social devaluing of the job plays an integral role in how teachers perceive their occupation. In Ben's case, low salary not only hindered his ability to live a comfortable life, but it also sent a message about how much society valued him as an educator. Ben described an experience with this condition of dissatisfaction in the following:

> For example, I had a great conversation with a girl in a bar in New York. Beautiful woman. She and I hit it off. Great chemistry and we were talking and she asked me what I do. I said I teach high school, I'm an English teacher, and she turned to me and said, 'This will never work,' and walked away. And I think that was something I saw a lot of my friends struggle with, males in their late 20s who are teachers, because I think in New

> York they weren't the best paid or whatever . . .Your apartment is less than the other guys; your car is not as nice as the other guys. And obviously there are social components to that. You know, money is how the show we value things in society and it is a source of pride for most people.

Finally, salary was often discussed in the narratives as inadequate compared with the amount of time the teachers were working. Many teachers felt that their monetary compensation would have been fair if they worked according to their contractual hours. However, the sheer amount of work that they needed to accomplish in order to effectively run their classroom, as well as the larger school environment, was disproportionate to their pay. While many of the participants noted that an increase in salary would not necessarily lessen their workload, they felt that higher compensation would instill a sense of fairness, thus mitigating their dissatisfaction. Betty highlighted the disparity between compensation and workload:

> I don't know if other public schools are like [private and charter schools] but for the amount of money that you make compared time that you work is way off. So I think that teachers are grossly underpaid. I think that even though we get off two and a half months during the year, I think that the amount of time that we put in to prepping and making sure that everything is right is not enough. We are underpaid.

Workload

Workload was one of the main sources of dissatisfaction for all teachers in the research. Overloaded working conditions create enormous amounts of anxiety, stress and unhappiness (Culver et al., 1990) and that overburdening is one of the primary reasons studies cite as a source of their dissatisfaction (Fullan, 1993). The main complaint surrounding workload throughout the narratives was the sheer amount of tasks that needed to be accomplished in order to keep the educational environment running smoothly. All teachers in this study reported having to work far beyond their contractual hours in order to grade, lesson plan, attend meetings, decorate or tutor. Many of the teachers noted how the long hours had tended to impede their personal lives and had

denied them the ability to engage in nonwork related activities. Teachers who are unable to find personal satisfaction as a result of working conditions are at high risk for disassociating themselves from those limiting conditions (Tolan, 1981). Julie described how her work schedule had a negative impact on her life outside of school:

> And [after work] you're like, "I can't even, I can't even make dinner." Like I'm tired, drained. You know? Everything was kind of . . . I stopped excelling with my grades [in graduate classes]. I was not failing but I really, really kind of dropped the ball. It's funny. I can't go to the gym, I can't do any school work, I don't know what's in my fridge.

Compounding the amount of work that teachers reported taking home was the incredible amount of work that was required of them throughout the day. Participants described working in environments that were filled with tasks that never seem to end. Bubb and Earley (2004) noted that teachers who experience a school day dense with tasks and a workday that is consistently both mentally and physically exhausting are likely to express strong feelings of dissatisfaction. Throughout the narratives, teachers constantly spoke about how the amount of activities that needed to be completed throughout the day made them feel like they never had a chance to effectively grade, plan, or collaborate with colleagues during work hours. Many described the daily job as a whirlwind where tasks would come in many different forms and from many different places. Michelle summed up her day at work in the following way:

> Man it's a long day. And it starts early, earlier than most people have to go in, and you're on a treadmill the entire day. You know you can't rest . . . That is a big struggle and that is such a huge burnout. You go from being an entertainer when you're leading your class to being a standard educator when your teaching. Then you will be a counselor to the parents of the students, the artistic director who puts up all the stuff in your room, you got the IEP to do . . . Work comes in from so many different angles that it's just never ending and vicious. . . . It's always one more thing to do and always not enough time. And man do [my staff] forget [that the work will never end, not matter how much we do]. This campus is horrible. There are people here until six or seven at night and I'm one of them. And I'm part-time. . . . . We're crazy. We are over dedicated to the point where no one

> cares except us. You know sometimes it's like, "I'm the only one that cares that I'm here until seven."

However, adding Emily's description of what happened when she went home illustrated the overload of work that teachers must contend with:

> Having five completely different preps a day is just so much. It's the grading that really gets to me. I have five classes that average about twenty students each. They are all completely different so that means I have to plan separate lessons for each class for each day of the week. That also means that the work they turn in is completely different too. Let's look at this realistically. I have around 100 assignments to grade on any given night. And I'm an English teacher so those assignments almost always include writing and revisions. If I want to do a good job on correcting a three paragraph response, we're probably looking at five to seven minutes per student. Not too bad, right? But multiply that by 100 [students] and now you are looking at 500 to 700 minutes to get through a single stack. Seriously? 700 minutes? That's what, almost 12 hours? And on top of that I have meetings, planning for the next day, extracurricular activities, and a life outside of school to live. Or do I?

Sachs (2003) noted that teachers who find themselves unable to cope with the workload and accompanying stress are at a much higher risk of burnout. As overloaded working conditions begin to impede on the personal lives of teachers, they begin to disassociate themselves from limiting conditions (Templin, 1998). When this occurs, the likelihood of teachers choosing to leave the profession to get away from the sources of stress and dissatisfaction greatly increases (Jepson & Forrest, 2006). Michelle noted that this stress might be even greater for new teachers due to the fact that many are not prepared by their education programs to expect the heavy workload that comes with being a teacher. Thus, new teachers are likely to be at an even higher risk of being overwhelmed as a result of being blindsided by the immense volume of tasks.

Finally, teachers in this study also mentioned the frustration with the workload because it did not allow them the proper time to plan and prepare for their classes. They felt that if they

could have more time, they would be able to more efficiently create high quality lessons for their classes. In essence, teachers felt that they had to sacrifice quality in order to accomplish quantity.

Colleague Interaction

In this study, colleague interaction generally fell into one of three categories. The first and most common description of colleague interaction dealt with the work-level relationships between coworkers. Many of the teachers spoke about how their relationships with their coworkers were amicable but did not transcend the boundaries of their jobs. Overall, teachers noted that they were satisfied with this type of relationship and that it created a satisfactory work environment that was productive and collegial. Matt described this type of relationship in the following:

> I think you're so tired at the end of the day that we just want to go home. I do have, I guess, as close as a personal relationship as you can with a couple people at my site but that's about it. And these are often individuals who, for me, demonstrated the same commitment to the students as I have and so there is a natural connection and everything. So were constantly fighting the power. The extent of our relationship after work is text messaging back and forth at home and that's it.

The second type of interaction was described as a negative interaction where there would be a level of hostility felt between coworkers. This interaction was of little work or personal value, which ultimately created feelings of isolation (Templin, 1988). Teachers spoke of these environments as unwelcoming and difficult to work in. Teachers who experienced hostile work environments tended to harbor feelings of frustration toward them and often chose to disassociate themselves from anything related to the source of stress (Fullan, 1993). Many of the teachers expressed that leaving a hostile environment was one of the perks of changing schools. Betty highlighted this type of dissatisfaction:

> It's just very difficult to let loose because it's such a fucking tight ass community. It's unbelievable. You know, it's unbelievable. And at my last campus, you know, my head of lower school, she used to talk shit on everyone . . . and it creates a non-trusting undertone where you don't trust each other because you're not sure if you can walk out the door and not have people talk shit. And you constantly think that they're judging you. It doesn't help you to be self-assured of yourself and your person, you know? And it's nasty. I don't like it. Like literally the first year I was there I started looking for another job because I felt that there. I felt very much judged and yucky there.

Finally, teachers discussed working environment where their colleague interaction was positive and went beyond the working relationship. Teachers who described experiencing this type of environment were enthusiastic when discussing their coworkers. Although the research questions revolved around the idea of dissatisfaction, it was clear that positive interactions with colleagues mitigated some of the frustration and stress created that participants were experiencing from other sources within the environment. This is in line with Kirkman and Shapiro's (2001) findings, which noted that strong relationships between work colleagues tended to coincide with greater feelings of satisfaction. Similarly, Kyriacou (2001) stated that positive interaction between coworkers often led to lower feelings of anxiety. Michelle described this type of interaction and the effect it had on her as a teacher:

> [My staff] is awesome in that respect and it means so much to me to be able to consider the people I work with to be real, genuine friends. It makes coming to work that much better. You know, when all the kids are being little shits and the day just drags on, there's something awesome about being able to look around and be with people who are just genuinely good people that you enjoy hanging out with. Honestly, this year has been really, really rough for me. I feel like it's getting better but there are still plenty of days where I look around and am just tired. And I don't know if I would have made it without [the staff].

Mandated Conditions

Teachers' experiences dealing with dissatisfaction with mandated conditions were generally described in one of three ways. The first type of response tended discuss how feelings

of frustration and anger were generated by having to adhere to certain mandates. Blake et al. (2010) explained that the loss of personal control that coincides with forced compliance is a common source of stress and anxiety. Participants who expressed negative feelings as a result of mandates detailed frustration at being unable to run the classroom in ways they felt was best for their students. Not only did they feel like their talents, experience, and knowledge were not being respected, but they also felt that the mandates that they disagreed with were ineffective. In his work, Fullan (1993) described these mandates as impediments to a teacher's ability to find satisfaction. In the narratives, teachers believed that many of the mandates they had to follow forced them to be a type of educator that was antithetical to how they viewed themeselves. Accordingly, attempting to work within these mandates caused them a great deal of discomfort. This discomfort was a result of trying to act or teach in a way that was unnatural and therefore undesirable. Julie described what it was like trying to adhere to a mandated condition that was not aligned with her teaching style:

> The system is what worked for [the person who developed it] and good for her . . . But it is literally trying to make you into a form of her and I think people realize that. [A coworker] is a huge proponent of them and I don't know why. And it may be the case that [the developer's] style and [the coworker's] personality work. I mean I've heard that his classes follow the system to a T and I've also heard that he's extremely authoritative in how he teaches, which would make sense. A lot of teachers who have frustrations [with the system] are teachers who really kind of . . . What's the word I'm looking for? What makes them good teachers is their rapport with the students. You know that personal relationship, which I think is everything? If that's how you approach [teaching] versus the authoritative, the [system] is not going work for you because the procedures are authoritative and behaviorist by nature. I'm not.

The second response found within the narratives was an attempt to resist any condition that teachers perceived to be ineffective. In these cases, the teachers in this study attempted to work around the mandated conditions as quietly as possible so as not to arouse attention to their

resistance. What made these responses different from the prior responses was that teachers were able to regain a semblance of autonomy through their resistance. Instead of being frustrated at being unable to find success due to a mandated system (Fullan, 1993), teachers were able to substitute their own practices, which allowed them to find a level of self-actualization as an educator. Betty highlighted this practice:

> So once I realized that I just decided that it's my classroom and I'm going to work it the way I used to work. You know, I still do some of the things because first, I was told to drink the Kool-Aid or leave and second, we have to have some consistency throughout. Like I don't want to be that one teacher that I hear is like, "Well they're not doing it in [my] class." You know what I mean? But I finally realized that I'm not going to do this. I'll just be myself. And boy did that take a load off. So I threw away the system in a sense.

Finally, mandated conditions also had the effect of creating a sense of ambiguity and being unsure for staff, particularly when conditions were a result of poor planning or poor implementation. In these situations, participants were left attempting to figure out how to adhere to the mandated condition as a result of never having been given any support or feedback as they carried it out. Teachers described this as a frustrating and stress-inducing aspect of their work environment. Marsh (1994) supported this phenomenon by noting that when leadership was unable to properly implement mandated conditions, staff was left unsure of how to proceed and, therefore, vulnerable to dissatisfaction. In the narratives, teachers who were unable to gauge whether or not they met expectations, or were at least making progress, were left feeling inadequate (Au, 2010). Emily described how a mandated condition, in the form of poorly planned and implemented curriculum development, created feelings of stress and dissatisfaction:

> I have a lot of autonomy but I don't feel like I have enough direction. When I think about getting a job elsewhere I know I'll miss the autonomy most, but not having enough direction makes me feel like I'm not being effective, and that paradox of having control and not having control chips away at me. I want to feel like I am being successful to a

> certain degree. With no accountability standards and nothing coming from the administration, it's easy to feel like you're working without a purpose. You're just doing to do. It can be hard to feel like you're doing a good job because you get lost in the daily grind. You can't really see what you're doing well and what is going wrong. And trust me, it feels like a lot goes wrong often. I guess that's just me being hard on myself but that's the only measure that I have. I mean, there is literally no accountability or expectations.

It should be noted that Ben believed that mandated programs did not necessarily have to be a negative aspect of teaching. But for teachers to buy in, these programs have to prove their effectiveness, respect the people that are carrying them out, and be presented in a way where teachers do not feel that their value, skill sets or experience are being demeaned (Giroux, 2013).

Personal Control

Personal control was usually described in one of two ways in the narratives. First, teachers in this study described personal control as a positive aspect within the working environment. In these experiences, they were pleased to have a level of autonomy to be able to build and run their classes as they saw fit. Those that felt a sense of personal control and autonomy also noted that they felt that their leadership respected their experience, talent, and effort and that they were grateful to have their administrators acknowledge their abilities. Whenever participants spoke about having a positive level of personal control over their classrooms, they always spoke enthusiastically about creating high-quality lessons and carrying them out with their students. The ability to self-actualize, as educators, appeared to create higher levels of satisfaction (Fullan, 1993). Betty described how she utilized her autonomy to create desirable art classes:

> The high-level conversations that I can have with kids and that they learn something new. And for me, sharing something that I already love but also learning something new at the same time. For example, I just found out that couple weeks ago that it's quite possible that Van Gogh was murdered and he didn't kill himself. We all watched the video [by] 60 minutes and [I] had a great discussion with the students after class just about that whole

> thing. And to me, that moment is what I like about teaching. It's what I can do that goes beyond the curriculum.

The second way teachers in this study described personal control related to lack of accountability described in the mandated conditions section. In these cases, the teachers felt that there was too much personal control over their working environments. More specifically, teachers felt that no one had any control over the environment and teachers were left to fend for themselves in creating and directing their classrooms. Unlike a healthy amount of personal control, this marked individualized control was undesirable due to the fact that there seem to be no cohesion between teachers or administration. The frustration that corresponded with this form of personal control was a result of teachers being aware that their administration was unable to properly set a direction for the school (Borman & Dowling, 2006). The appearance of freedom was actually a poorly planned and executed educational structure that forced teachers to fill in numerous gaps. Matt described this kind of working environment:

> In terms of the curriculum, I like the fact that it is authentic and if I choose, I'm able to create an entire curriculum, which I have done for certain classes. Not necessarily from scratch. I'll use for materials that I have acquired from colleagues or different places but I'm able to arrange and use a diverse range of materials. So I like the framework that we have that allows me that freedom. However it's also a framework that requires projects to be designed and produced by students and that's where I've had the biggest issues. I've gone to leadership and explained that, in theory, they presented us with a framework that most of us could understand. But in practice, I could never . . . In the 3 plus years I've been there and others who have joined during that time have never seen what an actual project of quality looks like from those who are responsible for creating the framework [that we are supposed to be following]. And so that's been the main issue. I had spoken about it on numerous occasions. There doesn't seem to be an interest in [creating a model] so I've taken it upon myself to do research to try to figure out what's considered an authentic project. So I'm doing my own personal and professional development on my own free time.

Summary

This section has compared the narratives of the teachers to the research surrounding teacher dissatisfaction as detailed in Chapter 2. The goal was to show how well the teachers' stories from the narratives matched with what prior research has found in relation to teacher dissatisfaction. The next section will apply the concept of alienation to the teachers' narratives so as to create a new framework through which to analyze dissatisfying conditions.

Analysis of Alienation

This section discusses how Seeman's (1959) conception of alienation was applied to the experiences that teachers shared in their narratives. The lack of existing literature connecting educational job dissatisfaction and alienation has left the need to develop criteria to connect the two concepts. During the analysis of the narratives, I noticed a pattern as I attempted to apply Seeman's (1959) subconstructs of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement to the shared experiences. Simply put, the subconstructs appeared to build off of one another. Using powerlessness as the foundational subconstruct, the remaining subconstructs formed a hierarchy where the presence of one subconstruct indicated the presence of all the subconstructs below it (see Figure 1). In other words, if self-estrangement, which sits at the top of the hierarchy, was found within a shared experience, it would indicate that all the other subconstructs were present within that experience as well. If normlessness, which occupies the third step of the hierarchy, was identified, it would also indicate the presence of powerlessness and meaninglessness but not isolation or self-estrangement as they are above normlessness on the hierarchy.

The following discussion links alienation to conditions of teacher dissatisfaction in the order of the hierarchy, starting from the bottom. With the exception of powerlessness, each subconstruct embodies elements of the previous subconstructs. Teacher experiences, as expressed in the narratives, were labeled by choosing the highest level of alienation that each experience exemplified. However, during the analysis of the experiences, any other subconstruct that was also present in the experiences was identified. In other words, if an experience was labeled as isolating, which is the fourth step on the hierarchy, the discussion also showed how powerlessness, meaninglessness, and normlessness were also identifiable in that experience.

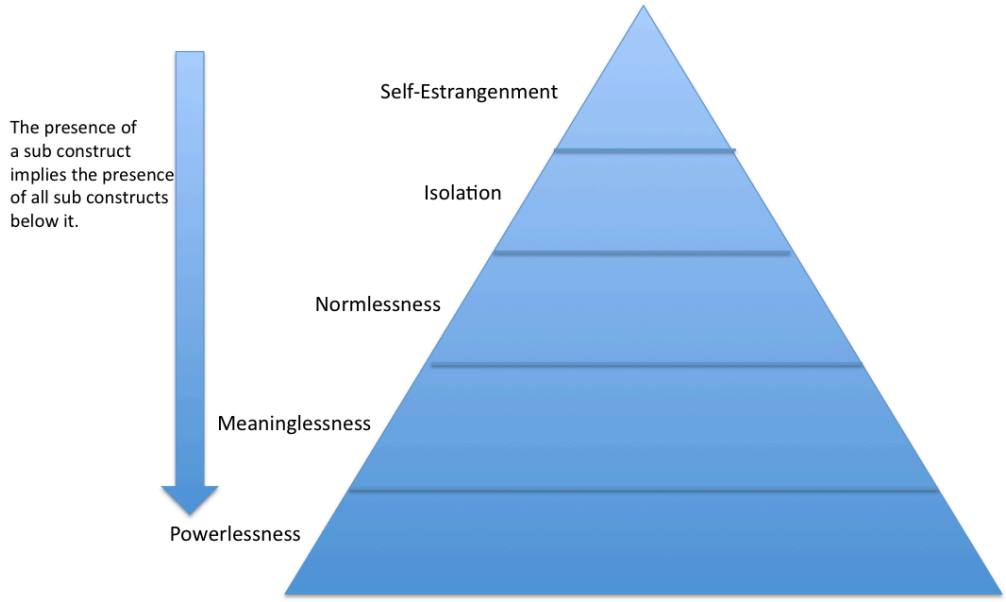

Figure 1. The hierarchical structure of the subconstructs of alienation.

Criteria for Categorization

Powerlessness. Conditions of teacher dissatisfaction were categorized with powerlessness when teachers identified conditions that they were unhappy with but did nothing other than identify them. Powerlessness was detected when teachers' narratives indicated that

they perceived an inequitable level of control over their working conditions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Giroux 1983; McLaren, 1989). Indications of powerlessness also included times when teachers expressed a lack of control over reinforcing situations (Seeman, 1959). Whether or not teachers could identify the external sources that were causing the loss of control over their environment, they were still able to express feelings of being unable transform conditions. During the analysis of alienation within school working environments, powerlessness was detected in every instance of alienation. However, almost no experience was categorized with powerlessness. A sense of powerlessness was the often the first sign of alienation. However, as teachers continued through the description of their experiences, it became clear that other subconstructs better described their level of alienation.

Meaninglessness. Building on the subconstruct of powerlessness, meaninglessness was identified in experiences when teachers expressed a frustration with conditions that were out of their control but also noted that they felt that the conditions held little value. Described as the inability to make sense of the conditions that one is engaged in (Seeman, 1959), meaningless was indicated as teachers described conditions within their work environment that they were powerless to control and also failed to effectively improve the work environment. When dealing with these working conditions, teachers expressed feelings of having empty, irrelevant choices (Travis, 2014) that limited their ability to work around the identified conditions. Mannheim (1940) noted that meaningless was created when working conditions engendered an environment where it was perceived that personal decisions would have little or no impact on desired outcomes. During the analysis for meaninglessness, teachers expressed how certain structural aspects of the work environment were ineffective or useless at carrying out the task of teaching.

Like powerlessness, teachers expressed indications of meaninglessness in almost every instance of dissatisfaction. Also like powerlessness, teachers' alienation was not limited to meaninglessness. Rather, experiences of meaninglessness were almost always accompanied by additional factors, making other subconstructs a better description for their identified conditions.

Normlessness. Stemming from feelings of powerlessness and meaningless, normlessness described a sense that working conditions have become a hindrance to fulfilling identified goals (Orru, 1989). Normlessness was identified as teachers expressed that they did not have the means to reach their work-related goals and that certain conditions were actually impeding their job (Bernburg, 2002). The category of normlessness was applied to working conditions when teachers discussed how limiting factors, created by meaningless conditions, actively denied them the ability to carry out their job to a desired level. Normlessness was also indicated when teachers' narratives pointed to a desire to disassociate with a structure that they perceived to be limiting (Bernburg, 2002).

During the analysis for normlessness, instances where teachers found that the structure of their work environment was inadequate in its ability to help them reach their goals as teachers will be pointed out. Normlessness usually coincided with feelings of frustration and stress as teachers detailed a perceived contradiction between their expectations for their job and the conditions in which they worked (Seeman, 1959).

Isolation. Isolation was applied to working conditions when instances of normlessness caused teachers to seek individualized ways to deal with limiting factors they were encountering. As individuals recognized normlessness due to meaningless and powerlessness, they often came to the conclusion that it was imperative that they remove themselves from the confining structure

(Tajfel et al., 1971). This self-removal from normless structures usually coincided with the creation of modified structures that were perceived to be more conducive to achieving identified goals (Nettler, 1957). Seeman (1959) noted how acts stemming from isolation were often classified as rebellious or resistant.

Within the context of teachers' narratives, isolation was identified when teachers expressed ways in which they resisted or made individual modifications to working conditions associated with normlessness. During the analysis for isolation, the discussion will point to experiences where teachers chose to remove themselves from limiting situations and employed personal adjustments that they felt were more conducive to achieving their goals. These actions tended to be the response when there seemed to be no way to alter identified limiting conditions through sanctions methods.

Self-estrangement. The category of self-estrangement was applied to working conditions when teachers' shared experiences that impeded their ability to fulfill their role as an educator. Self-estrangement stems from conditions that make one feel as if they were less than one might ideally be if the circumstances were different (Seeman, 1959). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) described self-estrangement as a situation where an individual loses touch with personal values and goals due to external conditions. In the case of teachers, working conditions that blocked their ability to actualize themselves as educators were labeled self-estrangement. These conditions often forced teachers to simply comply with a prescribed structure that has been created without their input, which ultimately stripped teachers of the opportunity to find value from their labor (Caoili, 1984).

In this research, self-estrangement was identified in conditions that teachers identified as actively blocking their ability to find satisfaction with their job. Self-estrangement differs from normlessness in that normless conditions were only identified as impediments to job completion and not actively identified as being a detriment to finding satisfaction as an educator. However, once the teacher referred to a dissatisfying condition as denying him or her of the ability to find satisfaction in being a teacher, the condition was categorized with self-estrangement. A normless condition could easily become self-estranging if a teacher decided that a condition that was initially identified as a job impediment had grown to impede their ability to find satisfaction.

Link Between Alienation and Dissatisfaction

Using the criteria shared earlier in this chapter to link alienation to dissatisfaction, alienation was found in every limiting condition shared within the teachers' narratives. Because there was no literature connecting the concepts of alienation and dissatisfaction in an empirical way, I had to rely on the participants to confirm and validate the way in which I connected the subconstructs of alienation to the their identified conditions of dissatisfaction. Using field notes, tone, language choice, and gestures, I attempted to apply the most appropriate subconstruct of alienation to the numerous shared conditions of dissatisfaction. With the connection completed, I then presented my findings back to the participants. The result was that teachers confirmed that they felt the connections were appropriate and that the description of the subconstructs accurately matched their experiences. The substantiation by the teachers confirmed a strong link between alienation and dissatisfaction. With this in mind, the following provides an analysis of the common trends with respect to the role that alienation plays in teacher dissatisfaction.

Using the context of the teachers' narratives, I illustrated how the presence of alienation could be detected in dissatisfying conditions. This section also highlighted the way in which Seeman's (1959) theory of alienation has been applied to the narratives in order to gauge the level of alienation within a given experience.

Dissatisfaction and powerlessness. Michelle was the only teacher to directly discuss a sense of powerlessness Her discussion was in relation to the fact that teachers sometimes perceived a lack of power over situations where they might find it if they attempted work for it. Michelle's assessment might have alluded to how the hierarchical structure of teaching environments, with their endless policies, procedures, and constraints (Barmby, 2006) condition teachers to silence themselves. Instead of being proactive, working long term within an educational setting can cause teachers to adopt a submissive role. This form of oppression results from teachers being placed in a position where they must defer their own personal thoughts to the agenda of the dominant (Darder, 2015; Freire, 1970). Michelle also explained that teachers may not advocate for themselves due to how numerous stresses and expectations, coupled with the high amount of energy required on a daily basis may have led teachers to be too mentally and physically worn out to engage in such activities.

Dissatisfaction and meaninglessness. Many forms of meaninglessness were found throughout the interviews. However, there were no conditions that could be categorized with meaninglessness, as additional factors within these experiences made other subconstructs more appropriate.

Dissatisfaction and Normlessness. The subconstruct of normlessness was one of the most prevalent subconstructs found within the teachers' narratives. The narratives indicated that

administrative support, salary, and workload tended to engender feelings of normlessness. Almost all experiences of powerlessness and meaninglessness coincided with teachers feeling like they were unable to work at the highest level possible and therefore categorized with normlessness.

Conditions that engendered feelings of normlessness varied extensively between teachers. This was due to the fact that teachers in the research were from a variety of backgrounds and content areas. Therefore, each teacher identified unique conditions that impeded their ability to work at their highest level. Whereas Betty identified conditions that impeded her ability to work at the highest level as a middle school art teacher, Julie identified conditions that impeded her ability to work at the highest level as a special education teacher. While the conditions might have seemed vastly different from each other, the trait that the normless conditions shared was that they did not allow the teacher to perform at a desired level (Orru, 1989).

Administrative support. Administrative support proved to be a working condition that often could be identified as a source of alienation. As school leaders, administrators hold a position of power over teachers and are the default decision-makers for the school. This automatically sets the stage for normlessness, as teachers are usually unable to exert any power over administrative or organizational decisions. The bureaucratic nature of modern education means that these decisions are usually developed by administration and handed down for teachers to carry out without their input (Lathan, 1998). As subordinates to administration, teachers are expected to implement these decisions to the expectations of their superiors. When these decisions show themselves to be meaningless due to any number of factors, the stage is set

for normlessness. Matt described the feeling of normlessness in relation to the way his administrators chose to carry out formal observations:

> The feedback I got was not helpful at all and I ended up having to submit five-page reflections on things that had nothing to do with what I was talking about. Nothing, nothing at all [from her critique was useful]. . . . It had nothing to do with [my lesson] and I'm expected to fill in these open-ended questions on a Saturday when I should've been planning for other classes?

Matt's description highlighted the way in which he was forced to adhere to an administrative decision that he was powerless to alter and held little value for him as an educator. Matt also noted that the time used during this exercise could have been better used to improve his classroom, thus making the observation process a meaningless task that also impeded his ability to do his job at the highest level.

Matt's example highlighted the importance of administrative decision making on teachers. The inability for teachers to control decisions yielded a high risk for creating powerlessness conditions. Veteran teachers who have developed extensive skills through training and experience were likely to be highly critical of any administrative decision impressed upon them. As was stated earlier, if a decision proved to be ineffective or an impediment to a teacher's ability to teach, they would automatically associate meaninglessness with that condition. The narratives showed that teachers who discussed conditions where powerlessness and meaninglessness were present also felt a level of normlessness as such conditions usually hindered their ability to be effective. It was as if the teachers already knew what was needed and could sense whether a new mandated condition would help or hamper their ability to teach.

The ability of administration to address issues of powerlessness and meaninglessness are the key to mitigating the effects of normlessness. It appeared that in almost every instance of a

normless condition, teachers found a level of meaninglessness with some aspect within the structure of their working environment. In the narratives, many teachers alluded to the possibility of there being better ways to go about achieving the goals that the normless conditions were attempting to reach. If the teachers could envision alternative ways of approaching problems that the normless conditions were supposed to be addressing, there was a possibility that the inclusion of their skills, experience, and ideas during the administrative decision-making process would yield more positive outcomes. The addition of teacher voice would address the issue of powerlessness and meaninglessness, as teachers would find themselves being active participants in creating the structures that make up their environment. By mitigating issues of powerlessness and meaninglessness, administration could effectively reduce feelings of normlessness.

***Salary*.** Salary was the next major condition when it came to feelings of normlessness. Teachers usually discussed how a teaching salary would not be sufficient to carry out a life that they envisioned for their future selves. In these experiences, salary was obviously a condition that was beyond their power to control. However, what made salary fall into the category of normlessness was that teachers felt that the amount of time they were putting into their jobs was not commensurate to their compensation. Many teachers found themselves working far beyond their contractual work hours to the point where they began to wonder if the time they put into being the best teachers they could be was worth the amount that they were being paid. Many teachers had come to the conclusion that their salaries were not a sufficient incentive to work the long hours that they found themselves putting in. In fact, salary had become a point of resentment as many teachers noted feeling slighted by unfair compensation. Emily noted how salaries could actually be a deterrent for working when teachers became overburdened:

> When you see “English Teacher” and the annual salary, it’s competitive on paper . . . but when you break down what the job entails, it’s awful. I have five preps including independent studies. Five. Five separate stacks of five separate curriculums to grade, each growing, Monday through Friday. The amount of work I have to do is insane, especially compared to what I'm being paid.

The inability to directly control salary, as well as the excessive amount of work that made salary seemed meaningless, created condition that is difficult to address. Unlike administrative support, the variables that created the feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness did not seem to have a straightforward answer. It is difficult to imagine a way that teachers could gain a sense of power over monetary compensation or reduce the amount of work that leads them to feel that their compensation is meaningless.

However, I also believe that salary is looked upon as a normless condition when teachers perceive a high level of dissatisfaction with other areas of their working environment. When teachers become frustrated with their jobs, salary becomes an easy target. It may be the case that the actual salary that teachers make is not the condition that needs the most attention. Rather, it is the conditions that make teachers feel like their compensation is not worth what they have to put up with that is what needs to be addressed. Teachers who find satisfaction with their jobs may be more likely to be satisfied with their compensation. Accessing teacher voice in an attempt to identify where there is a discrepancy between compensation and the amount one works may lead to combating normlessness found within the issue of salary.

Workload. Finally, the condition of workload also engendered strong feelings of normlessness. The strongest feelings were associated with the inability for teachers to find the time to complete all of the tasks that needed to be addressed in order to run their classrooms at the highest level. The sheer amount tasks that they were asked to accomplish throughout the day

created an environment where teachers could neither complete all of the tasks that were required of them nor feel like they had enough time to properly plan for their classes. Michelle described feeling overwhelmed with work and never having enough time:

> So I think the work hours and the workload. . . . That's tough, that's a hard one. Because we're not just grading papers, were doing so much more than that. And with the addition of technology, I mean, if everyone turned their assignments in on time, that would make our lives a little bit easier because then you would just move onto the next thing. But there's always that extra thing, there's always that parent phone call to make and that takes extra. . . . There's always that one more thing on that to-do list and you can't uncheck it. And with all the additions of things that help us like technology. . . . Well now I have to check my emails and now I have to put the grades in my computer and . . . Well now I have to do this, this, and this. And I have to go to the SST, and then the IEP meeting and then I have to come back and put pictures on the wall. . . . So I mean it's just this never ending list of stuff to do and I find it exhausting trying to keep up with everything. Man it's a long day. And it starts early, earlier than most people have to go in, and you're on a treadmill the entire day. You know you can't rest. That is a big struggle and that is such a huge burnout. You go from being an entertainer when you're leading your class to being a standard educator when your teaching. Then you will be a counselor to the parents of the students, the artistic director who puts up all the stuff in your room, you got the IEP to do . . .Work comes in from so many different angles that it's just never ending and vicious. It's always one more thing to do and always not enough time. And man do [my staff] forget that the work will never end, not matter how much we do.

Michelle's experience highlighted the feeling that there was never enough time to assure a high level of quality. Teachers found themselves trying to complete so many tasks that only so much time and care could be given to any one of them. Many teachers expressed frustration at not being able to excel at the tasks that they found most important, mainly teaching. They felt they had to sacrifice planning, preparation and execution in order to carry out other requirements. However, in having to carry out these other tasks, teaches clearly felt that their classrooms and lessons suffered from a lowered quality.

Like the issue of administrative support, teachers expressed a level of normlessness due to a sense of powerlessness over the ability to control the amount of tasks that they had to

complete as well as a feeling of meaninglessness derived from having to complete tasks that they felt were not imperative to their practice as classroom educators. Also like administrative decision-making, teachers alluded to the fact that there were possible answers to this condition of dissatisfaction. Once again, they pointed to how the inclusion of teachers as participants who could contribute in addressing this condition could both alleviate feelings of meaninglessness and powerlessness at the same time.

Dissatisfaction and isolation. Conditions that engendered feelings of isolation were almost always the direct result of normlessness. When teachers felt that they were dealing with conditions that they were powerless to change but also had very little meaning, they often found themselves disassociating from those conditions. The result was an educator who developed his or her own methods of achieving desired goals. These often took the form of teachers choosing to either ignore or alter limiting working conditions in order to more effectively carry out their job. In the narratives, mandated procedures that played a strong role in the day-to-day operation of a classroom setting tended to be the working conditions that created the strongest sense of isolation.

Conditions that led to isolation showed strong signs of powerlessness, meaninglessness and normlessness. The definition of a mandated condition implies something that is being handed down to subordinates from superiors, which the subordinates are expected to carry out. As a result, the subconstruct of powerlessness was automatically present in every experience of a mandated condition. As was discussed in the previous section, when veteran teachers found a mandate to be inefficient or ineffective, a feeling of meaninglessness was also attached to it. Once they perceived the condition as impeding their effectiveness, normlessness set it. It was at

this point that some teachers chose to disassociate themselves from the normless condition. Almost every teacher who resisted a normless condition spoke about doing so in a manner that would not draw attention to his or her resistance. However, their resistance allowed them to ignore what they perceived to be a detrimental mandate and carry out their job in a way that they thought was most conducive to them being an effective teacher. Betty described how she isolated herself by resisting a mandate in order to regain a sense of control within her classroom:

> So once I realized [the system wouldn't work for me] I just decided that it's my classroom and I'm going to work it the way I used to work. So I finally realized that I'm not going to do this. I'll just be myself. And boy did that take a load off. So I threw away the system in a sense.

The narratives from teachers were filled with ways in which they felt that they needed to step outside of sanctions, rules, and methods in order to best fulfill their role as an educator. This indicated that feelings of isolation were, in fact, a response to normless conditions. In order to best mitigate feelings of isolation, school leaders must be able to help teachers feel that they do not need to step outside the sanctioned structure in order to create the best possible educational environment. To do this, it becomes necessary to address those normless conditions that teachers feel limit them or force them to operate independently.

Dissatisfaction and self-estrangement. Like isolation, self-estranging conditions found within the teachers' narratives seemed to stem from normless conditions. It appeared that negative feelings associated with normless conditions could increase in intensity. At a critical point, teachers were forced to make a decision about these limiting conditions. While some teachers chose to isolate themselves in order to resist limiting conditions, other teachers were forced to continue to endure them. The longer teachers were forced to tolerate normless conditions, the higher their levels of frustration and dissatisfaction became. At some point, the

teachers' views of these limiting conditions changed from conditions that were ineffective to ones that were impeding their ability to actualize themselves as educators. Self-estrangement usually coincided with teachers feeling that their work environment did not allow them to be the teacher that they envisioned themselves being. They felt that their working conditions actively worked against their philosophy of education and their efforts to educate their students. Furthermore, teachers who expressed self-estrangement also felt that these conditions were unable to be altered or worked around. As a fixed part of a teacher's working environment, self-estranging conditions could be met with one of two options: a teacher could endure them at the risk of burnout or he or she could disassociate from them by leaving teaching altogether.

In the narratives, almost any single dissatisfying conditions could be associated with self-estrangement depending on the teacher. As many dissatisfying conditions entailed a sense of normlessness, it became a simple question of how much of a burden that condition was for a given teacher. Teachers who were able to find ways of mitigating stress and dissatisfaction of limiting conditions were less likely to show signs of self-estrangement. Conversely, teachers who indicated signs of self-estrangement usually did so in multiple areas. This indicated that self-estrangement might have been the cumulative effect of multiple normless conditions. In other words, it would be unlikely to find a teacher suffering from self-estrangement in a single area. Rather, self-estrangement became apparent as teachers began to crack under the stress and dissatisfaction they experienced within multiple areas of their working environments. Julie described her feelings about being shown the multiple ways I applied self-estrangement to her initial interview:

> You know, had I had this information earlier in my career, I think there might have been an opportunity to do something about it. But as I look at the sheet here and how many

> areas I have in the self-estranged category, I think that this may be too far out of control to fix. I mean, I agree with the feelings that you associated with self-estrangement and those are not good feelings to have as a teacher and I know that I have a lot of those feelings running around my head right now. And a major part of me is set on, "Fuck this, I'm not going to do this anymore. Five years is enough. There's no way I'm going to grind this out." Once you reach that point, I don't know if there's any going back. I mean, once you get to that self-estrangement level, is there any going back?

Once a teacher reached the self-estrangement level of alienation, they began to disassociate from the job completely. At that point, individuals felt that the dissatisfying conditions that they had to endure were acting against every effort they made to be an effective educator. As more and more conditions led to feelings of self-estrangement, it was only a matter of time before a person decided that their working environment would never allow them to actualize themselves through their labor.

In the narratives, Julie, Matt, and Emily all exhibited high levels of self-estrangement from teaching. While it is possible to show individual conditions of self-estrangement, it is far more powerful to understand the cumulative effect that self-estranging conditions had on their view of being an educator. I invite the reader to go back to reread their narratives to have a full appreciation of how self-estrangement has made an impact on their time as educators.

Impact of Alienation On Participants

Individual Analysis

Julie. The consequences of Julie dealing with a multitude of working conditions that were the source of self-estrangement had culminated in high levels of alienation to the point where Julie decided to leave teaching. Julie's working conditions had become so bad that she felt the need to begin seeing a therapist to deal with the amount of stress and frustration she had been experiencing. Working with her therapist, she had to create ways of separating herself from her

job in order to be happier and healthier at the personal level. Changing her attitude and perspective about the job allowed her to cope with dissatisfying working conditions but she was still unable to find true satisfaction from her work. Julie acknowledged that a teachers' personal identities were inextricably tied to their work identity and that it could be extremely difficult to find happiness in one area if a person was not happy in the other. The feeling of powerlessness to change dissatisfying working conditions combined with the cumulative emotional toll they have taken on her personal life has led Julie to experience high levels of alienation and dissatisfaction with being a special education teacher.

Matt. Like Julie, Matt had expressed that he no longer wished to be a classroom teacher. He hoped to stay in education but did not feel that he had a tolerance for being in a system like what he had been working in. Matt explained that if he was to stay teaching under current or similar conditions, there would be a high likelihood that he would become apathetic towards the job. He noted how his system would actually have allowed him to work at a low level since there was little accountability. He noted that he found that realization sad and shocking. The fact that he felt his working conditions had a strong possibility to turn him into an uncaring teacher was motivation for him to leave the classroom before it became a reality. He had already experienced feelings of apathy toward working with his fellow teachers and would do anything to get out of teaching before that apathy worked its way into the classroom and harmed his students.

Lastly, and probably most telling was that Matt said that staying with the job and letting the stresses and frustrations build within him might very well have destroyed his marriage, if he were to continue. He explained that his connection with teaching was incredibly personal and to let the job wear on him would not only affect him at the working level, but also at the personal

level. He and his family had already experienced tension as a result from the stress of working conditions. Feeling that his relationship with his family was far more important than a job, he vowed not let his occupation become a detrimental influence on his family.

Michelle. As a 15-year veteran, Michelle believed that she had an excellent understanding of how to be a classroom teacher. However, her experiences had been at odds with many working conditions. When Michelle experienced conflict between working conditions and what she felt she should be doing as a teacher, she usually experienced one of two possible outcomes. Preferably, Michelle hoped that she could resist alienating conditions by continuing to do what she felt was in the best interest of herself and of her class. She had found that successful resistance had allowed her to run her classroom in the manner in which she chose and in doing so, it allowed her to realize satisfaction as a teacher. While Michelle felt that this was preferable, I would argue that she was still experiencing alienation in the form of isolation. However, isolation seemed to be much more preferable than risking self-estrangement.

When Michelle was forced to adhere to administrative mandates that she disagreed with, she felt high levels of anxiety and stress and exhibited strong indications of alienation in the form of self-estrangement. Throughout the interview, Michelle's descriptions of mandated systems were extremely negative and her frustration could be detected in her tone, word choice and gestures. Even though Michelle has been working for 15 years, she noted how identified conditions within her interview that were associated with self-estrangement could very well lead her to want to leave her position. She believed that the amount of stress that she had been feeling was never worth sacrificing personal well being, especially if the sources of stress had little opportunity to be changed. While Michelle had been feeling high levels of stress and frustration

with her current school, she believed that it was possible to make changes to alienating conditions. She expressed the hope that identified conditions could be augmented before they became too much for her to bear.

Emily. Emily's experiences of normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement pointed to a strong possibility for burnout if she continued in her current work environment. Like Matt and Julie, Emily's experiences with school led her to wonder if she wanted to continue to endure the teaching work environment. Her experiences had created strong feelings of dissatisfaction and worked to alienate her from what she believed teaching to be. A relatively young teacher, the experiences that Emily detailed in her narrative might had caused irreparable damage to her outlook on being an educator. Emily noted that while she was sure that she needed to disassociate from her current working conditions, she had become incredulous about whether she would find working for another organization satisfying. She cautiously noted that there was a possibility that what she experienced at her current school was the norm for education everywhere. It may have been an extreme version of the norm, but she feared that the dissatisfying conditions she had experienced would be present no matter where she chose to work. And if that were true, was teaching really what she wanted to do?

Betty. The subconstructs of normlessness, isolation, self-estrangement were the strongest areas of alienation that could be found in Betty's interview. Like Michelle, Betty's extensive experience has taught her how to work around conditions that were not necessarily favorable to her teaching style or philosophy. In most cases, Betty had learned to gauge the severity of her dissatisfaction and take appropriate action. For the most part, she had been able to exert a certain level of control in order to combat normless conditions through isolation, thus avoiding self-

estrangement. However, there were also situations in which Betty had no recourse but to follow mandated conditions. These situations ultimately created a sense of self-estrangement from the job. Even though Betty only reported two areas where self-estrangement was present, the way in which she discussed the conditions during the interview indicated how powerful of an influence they were on her satisfaction as a teacher. These conditions weighed so heavily on her that she had been considering leaving the school in order to disassociate from them.

Ben. Of the six teachers in this research, Ben was the most satisfied of the group. Not only was there no indication of self-estrangement from teaching, his interview indicated that he was a teacher who understood difficult working conditions but still maintained a positive outlook on the job. The absence of self-estrangement was an important factor in judging Ben's commitment to the profession and it was highly unlikely that he was in danger of leaving teaching. However, both Ben and I agreed that his past experiences were not common for teachers and that the luck he has had by working with administrators who respect and trust their staff had played a large role in his satisfaction with the job. It was very possible that if Ben were to work in other environments that had been mentioned in this research, his story would be very different.

The Cumulative Effects of Alienation

Absence of Powerlessness and Meaninglessness within Narratives

Analyzing the narratives as a composite experience of teacher work conditions yielded several thoughts about the relationship between alienation and teacher dissatisfaction. First, the subconstructs of powerlessness and meaningless were almost never seen alone. I posited that this was due in large part to the experience levels of the participants. Veteran teachers have been in

the education system so long that they have become accustomed to dealing with conditions that are out of their control. Hargreaves (1994) noted that a lack of teacher control over their environments is one of the core characteristics of modern school culture. It is reasonable to assume that a lack of control over their environment has become so commonplace that teachers rarely give a second thought to powerless conditions unless there are circumstances that make such a condition stand out.

Likewise, the absence of meaningless conditions appears to speak to the same issue as powerlessness. Crocco and Costigan (2007) have claimed that teachers are often stripped of the ability to make meaningful decisions or have control over their working conditions. Since the description of meaninglessness is the perception that personal decisions will have little or no impact over desired outcomes (Mannheim, 1940), I would argue that like powerlessness, meaninglessness has become commonplace to a teacher's work environment. The everyday occurrence of these alienating subconstructs has normalized them to the point where teachers may have become numbed to their effects. Conditions of powerlessness and meaninglessness have become acceptable parts of teaching and thus were not identified as areas of dissatisfaction during the interview process. In the narratives, they only were identified when they became detrimental to a teacher, even though they may very well be ever present within the modern system.

Direction and Goals

Many of the teachers discussed alienation and dissatisfaction when it came to their administrators being unable to communicate in an effective manner. The feelings of alienation from this working condition were usually categorized as normlessness. Orru (1989) noted that

normlessness occurs when conditions reflect "an inadequacy of means for the fulfillment of culturally sanctioned goals" (p.119). Following this thought process, it seemed logical to look at how the inability of leadership to effectively set and communicate goals for their staff led teachers to have feelings of anomie. The lack of shared goals also created the need for teachers to set their own direction in order reach desired levels of success (Seeman, 1959), which usually required placing one's self into a state of isolation. Those who did not choose the route of isolation were left floundering without a direction and unable to reach the goals that played a critical role in conveying a sense of success. Teachers who shared stories of good administrators highlighted strong communication skills as well as the ability to provide their subordinates direction when desired.

Closely related to administration's impact on effectively setting direction and goals through strong communication were mandated conditions and how they played a similar role for teachers. Mandated conditions, by nature, set guidelines and metrics that teachers use to measure success. Mandated conditions that were described as dissatisfying fell into two categories. The first category contained mandated aspects that were so ambiguous that they failed to give a set sense of direction. These conditions led to feelings of normlessness, as teachers could not understand how the mandates would lead to achieving identified goals (Bernburg, 2002). They also engendered feelings of isolation when individuals felt they had create their own ways to achieve success (Orru, 1989). Mandated systems that failed to provide a path to achieve a goal were usually the result of poor communication from administrators. In these cases, freedom without enough direction proved to be a source of frustration and alienation.

The second type of mandate could be described as over-prescriptive and dominated certain aspects of the environment. Unlike systems that were too ambiguous in direction, these systems severely limited a teacher's autonomy. When comparing ambiguous and strict mandates, the latter created stronger feelings of alienation as teachers were forced to carry out actions simply because they were told to do so (Seeman, 1959). Caoili (1984) described these types of conditions as reducing the men and women who work within them to mere cogs in the larger machine. Once teachers were reduced to that level, feelings of not being able to actualize one's self generated self-estrangement. It was important to note how some of the more veteran teachers, when faced with self-estrangement from domineering conditions, chose to self isolate in order to resist the strong negative emotions that coincided with self-estrangement. By disassociating themselves from the self-estranging conditions, they were able lessen the impact of being alienated from the job.

Alienation and Teacher Resistance

Taking the analysis one step further, it appeared that isolation could be a coping mechanism to avoid the high levels of stress associated with self-estranging conditions. When faced with normlessness, there appeared to be two options for a teacher. As that condition continued to impede their ability to complete the job, it was almost inevitable that the condition would move from normlessness to self-estrangement. Once it reached the self-estrangement stage, that condition would become a major detriment to the teacher's well being. However, there was another possibility. Teachers who sense normlessness stemming from a limiting condition voluntarily employed an act of self-isolation in order to avoid becoming victims of self-estrangement. Through isolation, teachers removed themselves from limiting conditions.

Seeman (1959) remarked that isolation leads to an adjustment in actions that can appear to be rebellious in nature. Using the concepts found within alienation, I suggest that teachers who exhibited signs of isolation were attempting to cope with normless and self-estranging conditions. More specifically, they were attempting to avoid the self-estrangement that caused them to lose touch with their authentic self (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). It appeared that self-isolation was a reasonable reaction to normlessness and self-estrangement even if the teacher was not fully conscious of the specific ways in which they were being denied the ability to reach their aspirations (Seeman, 1959). In essence, veteran teachers who suffered from the effects of normlessness and self-estrangement may have proactively employed isolation to avoid the repercussions of experiencing them further.

It would also be reasonable to assume that veteran teachers who have experienced levels self-estrangement, which developed from normless conditions, may develop a wariness of potential conditions before they actually become self-estranging. If a teacher is able to identify possible self-estranging conditions while they are in the stages of normlessness, it becomes possible to act in order to forgo the negative effects of self-estrangement altogether.

Lastly, if I am correct in assuming that each of the subconstructs on the hierarchy of alienation embody the qualities of the lower subconstructs, it may be possible to explain teachers' resistance to reform in general. If teachers isolate from normless conditions because they know that normlessness is a precursor to self-estrangement, it makes sense that they might begin to isolate against anything that could lead to normlessness. If they sensed that powerless and meaningless were precursors to normlessness, they might actually begin to resist conditions while they were still in those stages rather than letting them reach the higher levels of alienation.

This suggests that teachers intuitively understand how limiting conditions move through the different stages of alienation. As powerlessness and meaningless are the first two stages, teachers may, in fact, begin to resist at the first sign of these subconstructs of alienation. They are, thus, preemptively isolating against what they perceive as potential sources of alienation. They would resist anything that they perceived to generate a feeling that they have lost control of their environment (Marx, 1944) or that has little value to them (Suarez-Mendoza & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2008) because they had experienced the consequences of alienation in the past.

The manifestation of resistance is often described as taking the form of teachers who are defiant or opposed to school reform or mandates. However, rather than seeing it as defiance, it may be the case that teachers can sense possible sources of self-estrangement, which is something to be avoided at all costs. Thus it can be argued that resistant actions may not be the result of jaded or rebellious personalities. Rather, they are defensive habits developed by educators who have suffered prolonged exposure to alienating conditions and are now protecting themselves from perceived potential sources.

Teachers and Normlessness

I found that normlessness tended to be the primary subconstruct that teachers experienced in their narratives. Incidents of self-estrangement and isolation both started as conditions of normlessness but were upgraded as teachers were forced to make a decision on how they wanted to deal with a given normless condition. Furthermore, feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness rarely stayed in those categories. They were almost always upgraded to normlessness. I believe that the personal connection that a teacher has with the job was the reason that this happened. The high levels of intrinsic demands the teachers placed on

themselves (Greenglass & Burke, 2003) could easily conflict with limiting conditions. As this occurred, the teacher could become frustrated with the inability to reach envisioned goals (Goffman, 1959).

When working conditions are unable to meet the high standards teachers create for themselves, normlessness is bound to occur. The longer a teacher stays in the profession, the more quickly he or she will begin to associate limiting conditions with feelings of normlessness. The unfortunate reality of modern education, with its seemingly endless forms of prescription, is that it has actually trained teachers to automatically assume new conditions or mandates will usually be unable to achieve the desired outcomes, which are so important to a teacher's outlook on the job..

The personal attachment to the job may also explain why conditions of normlessness often resulted in self-estrangement in the narratives. As teachers dealt with normless conditions, they came to the conclusion that they were being hindered in their ability to carry out their job. Since a teacher's personal side is so closely tied with their job, the longer they were hindered, the more likely it became that the limiting conditions would affect them at the personal level. Whether it was a single condition that had become a prolonged source of dissatisfaction or multiple sources that culminated in a teacher not being able to effectively teach, once the limiting conditions made their way into the personal side of the teacher, feelings of self-estrangement were soon to follow.

The Issue of Empowerment

The majority of this research had been about identifying the ways in which alienating conditions permeate educational work environments. The narratives and analysis detailed the

ways in which alienation within the work environment acted as an oppressive force that detrimentally affected individuals who came into contact with it. The current educational workplace makes it nearly impossible for a person to be able to pursue their personal ontological vocation of controlling their reality (Darder, 2015; Freire, 1970, 1989a). However, understanding how oppression was found within educational work environment also created the need to discuss how empowerment played a role in combating these oppressive conditions. Empowerment and oppression work in a dialectical relationship so any discussion about how to address and mitigate alienation and oppression must revolve around tenets of empowerment (Freire, 1970).

I believe dissatisfying and alienating conditions, at their very core, result from a power struggle between a dominant group, in the form of educational administration, and an oppressed group, in the form of classroom teachers. During the analysis of the subconstructs of alienation, powerlessness was identified as the starting point for all other forms of alienation. The teachers' narratives showed that a loss of power and control over their job, which many described as an intricate part of their personal self, ultimately led to severe negative consequences in both their work and personal lives. This power differential was often the case when the dominant administration was able to force their beliefs and methods upon the oppressed teachers. I would argue that the domination by administrators, which ultimately denies teachers the ability to actualize themselves as laborers within the educational work environment is indeed the starting point for alienation and oppression. Every dissatisfying condition found within the narratives resulted from a teacher's inability to find some level of control over reality.

Furthermore, the oppressive nature of dissatisfying conditions could also explain many of the problems that education has been continually trying to address when it comes to teacher

satisfaction. Whether or not they were cognitively aware of the oppressive nature of their environment, the teachers in the study were clearly reacting to alienating conditions. Looking at how the participants reacted to alienation, it is not difficult to imagine why teachers in general isolate, burnout, or choose to leave teaching altogether when faced with having to deal with oppressive conditions as a part of their daily routine. Ultimately, teacher dissatisfaction is not simply about salary, support or workload; it is about the lack of ability teachers have to exert control over their vocation, which is a critical aspect of their lives.

If the cause of alienation and oppression is a loss of control over reality, the solution to alienating conditions must be about the empowering ways in which teachers can regain control of their working conditions so that they can actualize themselves as laborers and as human beings (Darder, 2015; Freire, 1970, 1989a). The answer to alienating and dissatisfying conditions is to ensure that the teacher work environment becomes one where educators are able to participate in order to exert a level of control over the conditions in which they labor. The acknowledgment of teachers as intellectuals who have capacity to blend thought and practice as they become practitioners within the work environment (Giroux, 1988) would signal the move away from alienation and dissatisfaction towards an environment of inclusion and empowerment.

Creating an Empowering Space

The presence of alienation found within each of the interviewed participants created the need to engage identified oppressive conditions with tenets of empowerment. The goal of interview two was to allow participants to explore their working conditions from a new perspective of alienation and oppression. Taking the experiences from their stories, I applied the subconstructs of alienation, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, in the hopes of giving the

participants a new way to view their identified dissatisfying conditions that would increase the clarity and understanding of their experiences. However, giving a new framework through which they could better analyze their situations was not the only goal. Through the use of the subconstructs of alienation, it was hoped that teachers would begin to develop a new language and perspective to more accurately name their reality and thus be better equipped to theorize, formulate and act upon the conditions with a higher level of agency. Indeed, helping teachers by equipping them with new tools to critically examine their working conditions and distinguish the alienating aspects within them opened up new possibilities for engendering conditions of empowerment.

The following section details insight the teachers gained from the exploration of their experiences using alienation as the lens through which to view their narratives.

Interview Two

Interview two consisted of only two questions. The first question asked teachers to discuss how well the summary of alienation that I provided for their review matched what they felt about their shared experiences. The second question then asked the teachers to discuss if viewing the dissatisfying conditions from the lens of alienation gave them any new ideas about how to address them.

Instead of listing out each of the teachers' answers as was done for the first interview, I have chosen to share their answers in a thematic way.

Question 1: Connection of Narratives to Teacher Dissatisfaction and Alienation

Participants were asked to discuss what they felt about the connection I made from their narratives to alienation. Their responses gave insight into how accurate I was in applying the

subconstructs as well as how well the subconstructs matched their feelings toward the dissatisfying conditions.

A unique lens. All six teachers felt that the connection between alienation and their shared experiences was a powerful and unique way of describing what it was to be a teacher. Matt noted:

> You know, dude, this is pretty powerful to look at. This is why I am on my way out right now. You know, what's actually more interesting is seeing all my answers combined together in like this. I think the way that you've connected my responses and alienation puts things into a more clear perspective for me. You know, it's one thing for us to talk about dissatisfaction as we might see it on a daily basis. And of course we know that these issues that we discussed are present, but I don't know if we really give it a whole lot of thought. I think it's interesting to conceptualize these issues in the way that you show here.

Similarly, Michelle highlighted the new perspective alienation gave her about her working conditions:

> Wow, I like this. This is great. I think this shines a whole new light on what I was talking about. . . I love it. This is awesome. It's such a good way to think and talk about things that get in the way of us being teachers. It makes it seem like I'm not simply whining. There's substance, a level of importance that's attached to what I complained about. And I think that's important for both me and anyone who I talk to. It's like a validation all around. And you know, being able to talk about these conditions in a way that you can tell yourself that you're not just whining or complaining; that your problems are legit problems is a huge first step for yourself.

Validating emotion. One of the most important aspects that the teachers found important about the connection between alienation and dissatisfying conditions was the humanity that it brought to the working environment. Many teachers expressed the importance this process placed on their personal feelings as they related to working conditions. Matt spoke about the importance of attaching emotion to his job:

> I don't think we think about [these issues] as they affect us on a personal level. And if we're not thinking about them on a personal level, we probably don't see what is actually

> happening to us until it's too late. See, I always knew and could talk extensively about the problems that I have at [my school] but I never thought about the impact on me as a teacher. I knew I didn't agree with a lot of things that were going on, but to see it laid out like this. . . . It's different and definitely speaks more to why someone might want to get out of the profession. Being a social justice advocate, the alienation aspect of this is an important thing I think has been missing from the conversation, you know? We always have conversations about these issues in a way that removes the personal, ya know, the human side of it. When that human side is lost, the conversation becomes. . . . It becomes professional. You know what I mean? The humanity or the way it affects us on a personal level is lost and then we can't have a conversation about that. And it's important. I'm on the way out and I know a lot of other teachers who are doing the same. It's too simple to say that it's the conditions we spoke about causing that, ya know? There's something deeper and we don't ever talk about it. You know it's there, but you don't talk about it at the professional level.

Michelle noted how important it was for teachers to feel validated in bringing their emotions into the equation and how it was usually frowned upon in the working environment:

> I think what this does is it sums up my feelings in a way that can be shared and not just discarded as, you know, something that isn't important. I mean, a lot of times if you bring up feelings about the work environment, the attitude is something like, "You know, you need to be more professional about this. This is work and you aren't supposed to really like it so get over whatever hurt feelings you have and get the job done." I think a lot of teachers go through stuff like this and it is never addressed because work and emotions are [seen as] separate issues that can't be mixed.
>
> Yeah, looking at this. . . I knew all of this stuff on the inside. You know, I could feel all of these things happening to me and affecting me and that I didn't like what was going on. But this is so much more . . . it puts it in a way where I feel like, with some tweaking, I really could use this to start conversations about these conditions and really have people listen. I think with [this analysis], you can really identify serious issues and approach them with a more compassionate viewpoint. And you know, that's what is lost a lot of the time in business. That compassion. But as teachers, what else could be more important? We always talk about compassion for our students and love and all that. Well why not use that same approach for teachers? It seems reasonable, right? But I guess it's lost in the grind of adult life and business. Feelings, emotions and all that are weakness, right? I think this would make a pretty good case against that.

Emily echoed the idea that feelings and emotions were usually viewed as faux pas:

> What I think this does well is speak to the emotional side of what is going on. You know how I was complaining about all that stuff during the first interview? You kind of get to the point of feeling like a little kid who's whining about stuff that they shouldn't whine about. And we all know, as teachers, how we feel about those types of kids. So we don't

> want to be them because then we'd end up hating ourselves for being that kid. But yeah, there is definitely that part of me that says that I should stop whining about stuff and suck it up. Others are doing it so why can't I?

Emily went on to discuss how the connection not only validated her emotional reaction to working conditions but also helped give her a sense of clarity about why she was reacting to the conditions:

> I think this explanation, or rather how you have framed these conditions really talks about the emotional toll being a teacher can take on a person. It's kind of a license to say that it's okay to be frustrated or pissed or angry about some of the stuff that we go through. It's also kind of categorized my frustration as well. I totally agree with the way that you've used the different types of alienation to describe how each of the conditions are affecting me. It makes a lot of sense to be able to say that this is pissing me off in this way and that is pissing me off in that way. It puts things into perspective and helps make a lot of sense of them emotional wise. I definitely knew that this stuff was dissatisfying, right? Duh, that's why I talked about it. But this really just cuts right down to it and makes a lot more sense about what I was saying. Even more than I could make of it. That's right, this paper knows more about me than I know about me. Spooky.

Betty, too, spoke of the importance of acknowledging the ways in which working conditions impact a teacher's personal and emotional side:

> I agree with everything that you've written here. What I see here is that you've taken dissatisfaction and removed the professional aspect of it and turned it into something that is much more personal. When I say that you removed the professional aspect of it, it's not like someone is going to look at this and think that we aren't talking about a professional setting.
>
> I think it's important to realize that our profession is very personal to us and that things that make us unhappy or fuck with us at the professional level are also doing the same things at a personal level. And I don't think it's fair that we only approach these issues as only professional issues. You know what I mean? If these issues are affecting us on both the professional and personal level, we really should be trying to approach these issues from both of those perspectives, right? And you know, [only from the professional level] is kind of the way the business world works but that's not necessarily how it should be. I mean, this is education. We're here to build people and if we only tackle the professional aspect of that, it seems a bit hypocritical, you know, that we treat each other and I think this could easily extend to the students. We treat everyone in this setting in only a professional manner while ignoring that they are people with feelings.

Reconceptualizing the job. Another theme that came from question one was how the teachers were surprised at how many dissatisfying conditions they had been dealing with. Being able to see all of the conditions of dissatisfaction laid out one after another seemed to give them a new insight into their respective jobs. Matt reacted to seeing his narrative connected to alienation:

> Man, that's kinda disturbing to look at. It's interesting that you show this connection between alienation and the work environment because, I mean, in terms of our school, we're a social justice oriented school and to see these working conditions and how they have created a marginalizing environment for us is disturbing.

Julie noted how the narrative highlighted the reason that she had chosen to leave the classroom:

> You know, had I had this information earlier in my career, I think there might have been an opportunity to do something about it. But as I look at the sheet here and how many areas I have in the self-estranged category, I think that this may be too far out of control to fix. I mean, I agree with the feelings that you associated with self-estrangement and those are not good feelings to have as a teacher and I know that I have a lot of those feelings running around my head right now. And a major part of me is set on, "Fuck this, I'm not going to do this anymore. Five years is enough. There's no way I'm going to grind this out." Once you reach that point, I don't know if there's any going back. I mean, once you get to that self-estrangement level, is there any going back?

Julie felt that the narrative analysis gave her powerful insight into her job. However, she also discussed how viewing working environments from a lens of alienation might not be the best option for new teachers as it could easily lead to overwhelming an already overburdened group of young educators:

> I guess the other question is, "As a new teacher, even if you had this information, would you know what to do with it?" I mean, new teachers are not just struggling with education, right? They are just out of college, don't know a whole lot about the real world, really don't have a clue about what they are entering into when they start teaching. They are just kids, you know? Suddenly you hit them with this psychoanalysis and say, "Well here you go. Here's all the stuff that you're suffering from. Another thing on your plate for you to deal with. Good luck." I don't know if I would have been able to do

anything with this when I was starting out. I think the information is important and could do a lot of good but there has to be some sort of action from veteran people; you know, administration. It's really the schools that need to address this issue as an organization or whatever. I think this information would be a great self-check to see how a staff is doing so that people can do what is necessary to keep their teachers in a good place. It's like taking a hard look in the mirror. But sometimes that the most important thing to do.

Like Julie, Betty noted how insightful and frustrating it was to see all of the sources of stress and dissatisfaction placed together for analysis:

> You know, this is really scary to look at. It really is. I mean, if you are looking at this, would you want to become a teacher? I kind of want to just give this to people who rag on teachers because, you know, we get a couple months off during the summer time, we get Christmas off and we get Easter off, and you know, those people who always say that teaching isn't that difficult and that we shouldn't get paid more. I'd like to hand this to them and say, "Hey you, take a look at this and fuck off." Right?
>
> Just kind of reading this over and looking at what we had talked about and then seeing how you took those extra steps with alienation to make it a much more personal issue. It's really. . . . Yeah. I think there's even another piece of this. Maybe not another piece but you could really easily add on more things. You know how we talked after the first interview and just kept chatting about our own experiences with things that suck about teaching. We easily went on for another 45 minutes [after we had finished recording] listing out things here and there that really can wear on you as a teacher and those things aren't included in this. You know if you actually took all of the things that a teacher could list and really drilled down into those issues and then applied the same alienation categories, this report could easily be five to six times longer than it is. That's kind of scary, right?

Even though Ben did not express high levels of alienation within his narrative, he spoke about the potential impact of alienation if his working conditions were less satisfactory:

> I could definitely see the importance of the connections between the dissatisfying conditions and alienation. It doesn't take a lot of imagination to alter some of the things that I said to make them a little more concerning or little more serious and watch how the categories of alienation change and how that would affect my satisfaction with the teaching. For instance, you mentioned the idea of salary and we talked about how I made money on the side and how, if I didn't have good investments, I probably wouldn't be in the profession. If I had to deal with the salary as my only income, it would be very different connection to alienation than you have here. And, of course, I would probably be much less happy with that aspect of teaching, probably to the point of not wanting to teach.

Question 2: Understanding Alienation and Identifying Possible Solutions

Each of the teachers was then asked to discuss if understanding dissatisfying conditions from the perspective of alienation allowed them to come up with possible solutions to their identified conditions.

A valuable exercise. All of the teachers noted the importance of conceptualizing their work environment within the context of alienation. However, unlike the responses about the individualized understanding they gained in the first question, they spoke about the possibility of gaining an important insight to the entire environment by having multiple teachers go through the process and then identifying common themes between the narratives. Julie noted this possibility:

> I think this would be an eye-opening thing for a lot of people to look at. Yeah. If you could get a lot of teachers to do this and combine it into a single document or spreadsheet or however you'd present it, that'd be a really powerful thing.

Emily also spoke about the potential of using multiple sources from the same environment to better understand a given work environment:

> It doesn't take a genius to imagine the how this could benefit a competent leadership group in assessing how their teachers are doing. I mean, look at what you could say after looking only at my interview. There are a ton of things that we could try to do to improve any one of these. Now imagine that you could do it to a group of teachers at a site, a department, or even at the district level. There is a ton of potential for change.

Finally, Ben spoke about the possibility of using the information gathered from interviews as a sort of climate survey that could help identify potential issues within a school site:

> I think someone can take a look at this information to have a better sense of what I'm going through and why it's important to address the things we have to deal with. What I would be interested in seeing is the other people you interviewed and how they responded and how you drew connections between their responses and alienation. I think that would

> give a great overview of the school site, or department, or any sort of group of teachers to see if there are any common themes that they are dealing with. So not only do you identify conditions of dissatisfaction, you also start to rate which ones are wearing your staff down the most so that you can actually try to address those issues.
>
> This kind of seems like an advanced climate survey that could give a lot of good information to administration and the staff as well. I think this is very telling about myself as a teacher and could give me an opportunity to reflect both as a professional and as a person. For an administrator, this would be an awesome tool to identify issues within the site so that you can create the best environment for your teachers as possible. I know that the administrators that I had worked with would find this information extremely valuable.

A possible catalyst for action. Many of the teachers stated that they believed understanding working conditions from a human lens might help to spur both teachers and administrators into action. Matt noted:

> You know, any change that needs to be made has to come from us as a staff. And the unfortunate thing about this research that you're doing is that you have an extremely limited number of people you're talking to. I think if anything was going to change, you'd really need to find a critical mass of people that can share their stories, talk to each other and then hopefully find some clarity on issues so they can act together to make changes. I imagine that if all the teachers at my site were to go through this exercise, we could find some common themes or threads and we'd be much more likely to affect change. But as for the fact that I'm the only one that has undertaken this exercise, I don't know if anything can necessarily change. . . .
>
> [But] I think there's a lot of potential in going through this exercise. Like I was saying, I think all of the things that I found beneficial is applicable to other teachers as well. I think it could be a great professional reflection piece that can really narrow in on problems that teachers have to deal with. I think it would be a great organizing tool and teachers who really put the time and effort into self reflection would probably walk away with a higher chance of actively engaging these issues rather than having a passive approach. You know, when we last talked I had mentioned the idea that teachers have the ability to act but sometimes we're so beaten down that we choose not to and we give up our power and cede our power simply because we choose not to act. Whether or not this is the answer, I'm not quite sure. But I can definitely picture it being a way to identify problems as well as being a strong motivator to act, which is something I think has been lost by teachers and we desperately need to get it back.

Betty also noted the importance of bringing the views of her colleagues to the forefront of conversation and the possible reaction from administrators:

> Like I was just saying, I think that I have some ideas about what I would like to see. But I don't necessarily think that I have all of the answers. I think the best way to approach these issues is to see if I'm on my own with this, which I don't think I am, or if other people are feeling the same about things that are going on in the school. You know, if people are all having the same problems, then it's something that we should talk about, and [this is] a problem that they rarely comes up [in our normal teacher discussions]. Things like this need to be on the table [for us to discuss]. I think this [assessment] would be very hard to look at and then turn around and say, "Well, this is just the way it is," and leave it at that. I would hope anyone looking at this would at least say, "We really need to do something about these things because they are fucking with our teachers."

Personal reflection. Unable to envision specific changes to the working environment due to the need for more perspectives, many of the teachers noted how important it was to have a higher level of clarity surrounding the impact of working conditions on themselves and their practice. Ben stated:

> As far as actions go, I think that's kind of a personal question. Not that I mean that I won't answer it but rather that a lot of what is described here has to do with my own feelings about things that are going on in the professional environment. I think knowing that these things are placing a stress on me is a good piece of information so that I can deal with it. And each person can a find a way to do that on their own. But if you asked me how these things affected me on the personal level before we had these two interviews, I probably wouldn't have had a really good response for you. This information is really good because knowing that these things are affecting me allows me to actually take steps to address the personal side of this, which is something I don't think a lot of teachers do. And that may very well account for the high dropout rates, burning out, or other things that happened to teachers over the course of their careers.

Michelle noted how powerfully the data spoke to her and the need for her to take time to fully process the implications:

> You know, I'm not quite sure. I think I'd need to really sit down and do some personal reflection about this if I really wanted to figure out what I wanted to change. I think what this did for me is it gave me a lot of clarity about what was going on inside of me. And that's the first step, right? I think that clarity is important because it reshapes how you view a lot of things. I mean, we talked about how many topics? Nine, ten? We really just barely scraped the surface of the whole thing. I think you really could apply this concept to everything. It's like seeing teaching from a whole new perspective. I mean, I'd love to sit down and start hashing out a lot of other things that I deal with on a daily basis

> to categorize and view them from this perspective. So taking time to digest all of this would be a huge first step for me.
>
> And then like I said, the idea that this frames dissatisfying conditions in a way that you can display emotion and talk about feelings and not sound like a whiny little you-know-what is important. This is the perfect blend of professionalism and being a human being. I think it does a great job of highlighting both.

Finally, Matt noted how the interview data and the corresponding alienation helped clarify his view of his job:

> But what I will tell you is that what we've done [in this interview] has given me a chance to think about how I want to approach these situations knowing that things are probably not going to change anytime soon. So for me, this is a great introspective exercise where now I have to sit and think about how I want to carry myself from this point on. Do I want to stay with this organization? You know, if I were considering my options I think I would say that going through this [interview process] would make me feel more inclined to find a position somewhere else. The ability to put my frustrations on the table and analyze them and then acknowledge that my emotions and frustrations and anger are all validated has been a really important self-reflection exercise. And for me, any reservations I had about leaving because I have loyalty to my organization or the thought that I should just tough it out is gone.

The Relationship Between Alienation and Empowerment

The responses of the teachers during the second interview led me to reflect on the dialectical relationship between alienation and empowerment as it relates to what it means to be a teacher. Critical theory recognizes that, dialectically, empowerment and oppression work in constant tension and each concept can never be discussed in isolation. Rather, engaging a single concept requires one to be mindful of how the other is also present. More specifically, I wondered if the way in which the subconstructs of alienation broke the larger concept into detailed categories that built on each could be done for empowerment. In other words, could tenets of empowerment be used to more accurately explain the dialectical relationship between alienation and empowerment, as it exists in the educational work environment?

The following is a discussion of how tenets of empowerment and subconstructs of alienation work against each other within the teaching environment. Similar to how the subconstructs build toward total alienation, the tenets of empowerment become integral components to engendering empowering environments. I believe that engaging empowering tenets where their alienating opposite has been detected is an imperative step in combating alienation. A detailed explanation of both the subconstructs of alienation and tenets of empowerment has been given in chapter two so the following will focus on discussing the relationship between the two rather than defining them.

Voice as a response to powerlessness. During the interview process, a sense of powerlessness proved to be the starting point for alienation. Almost all alienating experiences stemmed from procedures, curriculum or mandates that were demanded of staff without their ability to have any input in the process. The lack of voice in decisions surrounding work environments emerged as a common trend of teacher dissatisfaction.

Giroux (2009) stated that being able to both exercise voice and be listened to constitute critical components to being an active participant within one's world. Applying this to the teacher work environments, the ability of teachers to speak on their own behalf about the development and implementation of conditions within which they work would most likely negate feelings of powerlessness. As teachers are able to exercise their voice, there becomes a sense of participation and control over their working conditions. Reality thus becomes something that is not simply impressed upon them by positions of higher power. Rather, through the exercise of their voice, teachers are able to share their feelings, beliefs, and experiences as work related decisions are theorized, built, and implemented.

Dialogue as a response to meaninglessness. Meaninglessness was also detected in every experience of teacher dissatisfaction. In some way or another, participants felt that many mandates, policies, or conditions lacked a sense of purpose or place within their work environment. However, I do not believe that administration or other leadership intentionally implements meaningless conditions. I believe that, far more often than not, upper levels of leadership make decisions with the goal of having a positive impact. However, notwithstanding good intentions, teachers have often perceived these mandates and conditions to be less useful than they were intended to be.

Building on the tenet of voice comes the possibility of combating meaninglessness with dialogue. Whereas voice requires and values the individual narrative stemming from empirical experiences, dialogue supposes that many voices can come together with the intention of building a shared understanding of the reality in which they coexist. In the educational environment, there are many stakeholders who have various beliefs, goals, and experiences that are invaluable to building a more complete understanding. It becomes imperative that these different experiences with the world come together in a meaningful way to create a fuller, more complete picture of what is happening within a working environment. With shared perspectives and insight from a variety of stakeholders, it becomes less likely that decisions that might lead to feelings of meaninglessness would be implemented. Through dialogue, all parties could reach a richer understanding of what is needed in the environment and thus be in a better position to make more informed decisions regarding policies or mandates.

Agency as a response to normlessness. Closely related to meaninglessness, normlessness was detected as teachers felt that meaningless conditions became impediments to

their ability to perform their jobs at the highest level. Teachers who experienced normless conditions usually started to show dangerous levels of frustration that often led to isolation or self-estrangement. The inability to effectively carry out their job proved to have serious consequences for educators.

Accordingly, agency would be the dialectical opposite for feelings of being unable to have meaningful control over one's environment. Albert Bandura (1998) described agency as the ability to succeed in specific situations. If the prerequisites of voice and dialogue were present in a work environment, it would make sense that there would most likely be a strong possibility of agency within that environment as well. Teachers who felt like they could express their voice as well as be heard for the purpose of dialogue with leadership and colleagues about decision-making would probably feel a sense of control over working conditions. It would not be a far stretch to believe that continuing dialogue within a work environment would lead to educators who believe that, through working together, the ability to positively change the environment was always possible. Thus, a sense of agency would be a core aspect of that environment.

Solidarity as a response to isolation. Experiences of isolation occurred as teachers explained the need to remove themselves from sanctioned structures in order to actualize themselves as educators and build what they felt were the most effective educational environments. In these experiences, teachers felt that connections to other staff members were dangerous or unnecessary as the isolated teachers did not align with what other staff members were doing. However, in cases of isolation, teachers felt that the risks of reprimand and aloneness were necessary sacrifices to finding meaning when the sanctioned structure created none.

Environments that are able to build practices of voice, dialogue and agency greatly reduce the possibility of isolating members . Solidarity requires a communal narrative (Skubikowski et al., 2009) that is built through dialogue and leads towards a shared sense of agency. Ensuring that a work environment continues to foster dialogue and agency would inevitably lead individuals to enter into true collaboration. As individuals come together in other to confront reality with the intent of acting upon it, they enter into solidarity with one another (Freire, 1970).

Praxis as a response to self-estrangement. Self-estrangement seemed to be the culmination of the other subconstructs of alienation. As each of the subconstructs progressed to the next subconstruct, the detrimental effects increased as well. The final subconstruct of self-estrangement signaled that a working condition was acting as an experience that was completely separating the teacher from what he or she believed his or her role to be, thus alienating that person from the vocation.

If self-estrangement is the culmination of the negative effects of alienating conditions, praxis would be its dialectical opposite. Ensuring that the reflexive nature of action and practice (Freire, 1970) that define praxis becomes a staple of an educational work environment could help teachers to empower themselves to their fullest potential. That is to say, teachers who are able to genuinely share their voice in a continuing dialogue for the purpose of acting will experience high levels of agency. Acting with and for each other as they undertake the process of controlling their reality engenders solidarity. Continuing this process in a cyclical manner, which is the definition of praxis, would ensure that teacher working environments become environments of empowerment rather than environments of alienation.

Bridging the Mind, Body, and Spirit of the Educator

Replacing alienating conditions within the educational work environment with empowering ones not only functions to create better labor conditions, it also acts as a way to humanize educators. The use of alienation as the framework through which to analyze dissatisfying working conditions does not simply serve as a way to better describe why such conditions are inefficient and ineffective. Nor is it applied in order to suggest a prescribed course of action to improve educational work environments. Rather, the application of alienation is meant to spotlight the need to understand the impact that the work environment has on the personal side of educators, which in turn affects their labor. Furthermore, by using alienation to understand how the oppressive nature of a given environment affects the people working within it, it becomes possible to see how to replace alienating conditions with empowering ones. However, it is critical to keep in mind that the side effects of empowering environments are engagement, participation, and collaboration. In the case of education, empowered teachers would inevitably find increased levels of satisfaction with their work. Furthermore, the ways in which empowered educators interact from a place of respect, collaboration, and continuous learning may very well lead to building innovative solutions to educational problems beyond that of dissatisfaction. However, it is through focusing on the educator as a person rather than their productivity or efficiency that this is accomplished.

Challenging the Traditional Structure of Dissatisfaction

The data from the research pointed to the presence of alienation within educational work environments. Using a critical lens, the idea of teacher dissatisfaction became a very different problem from how traditional views analyzed and attempted to explain the problem. The current

trend of identifying teacher dissatisfaction tends to focus on the individual and how he or she may react to any number of stimuli found within the context of being a teacher. This stance unfairly puts the problem onto the individual as if dissatisfaction were a personal issue that needs to be addressed by that person. As an 11-year educator, I have heard people on numerous occasions say things like, "You're a better person than me," or, "I could never put up with being a teacher. How do you do it?" I have also heard teachers who left the profession say things like, "I'm just not made out to be a teacher," or "I just can't do it anymore."

While I do not claim that being a teacher is a job for everyone, what these statements have in common is that they place the blame of dissatisfaction or inability to deal with educational conditions on the personal self. What can be inferred from these comments is that these people, in some way, have a deficiency that is causing them to be unhappy with teaching. Furthermore, if this deficiency were not present or could be fixed, they would not be dissatisfied. The common sources of dissatisfaction found in Chapter 2 and many of the corresponding solutions seem to adhere to the notion that the problem is within individuals who make up the teaching force.

Modern education continues to follow this thought process, as the questions and solutions surrounding teacher dissatisfaction continue to be about changing or fixing people. What can we offer to get the individual to *not be dissatisfied* with being a teacher? How do we better prepare a person for the "rigors" of teaching?

But what if the problem is not the teachers who are in the system? What if the problem is the system itself? What if the problem is that what it means to be a teacher in the modern education system has become antithetical to what people enter the profession to do? How do you

prepare someone to enter into a system that fundamentally works against them? The answer is you cannot. And maybe this is why education continues to fail in addressing teacher satisfaction and retention.

Understanding that the job of being a teacher is alienating to the notion of what a teacher should be can explain many of the current problems with understanding teacher dissatisfaction and the corresponding consequences. First and foremost, seeing the job as alienating affords an important insight to a quality that underpins all forms of dissatisfaction, which is something that is missing from current understandings of the problem. Dissatisfying conditions are no longer seen as individual issues. Rather than trying to solve seemingly independent problems with their own solutions, all problems can be approached with the relatively simple question, "How is [insert dissatisfying condition] denying our teachers the ability to be the teachers they envisioned themselves to be?" The answer may not be as simple as the question, but understanding dissatisfying conditions as alienating gives a common starting point from which to talk about all forms of dissatisfaction.

Second, viewing the educational work environment as alienating can help explain why there is such a poor retention rate among new teachers. There is something to be said about the fact that some of the brightest college graduates that the United States has to offer feel like they cannot be successful educators and choose to leave the profession. With an attrition rate hovering around 50% during the first five years, it becomes necessary to ask what commonalities exist among these gifted young men and women that make them want to leave. Furthermore, if one were to consider veteran teachers' levels of isolation and self-estrangement found in this study and reason that many other veteran teachers may have similar experiences, the sheer number of

educators who experience serious levels of dissatisfaction becomes too high to attribute to personal issues. The loss of almost half of all new teachers in the first five years and the likelihood of high numbers of veteran teachers experiencing some form of alienation as evidenced by this research points to a systemic problem.

Finally, the idea that the job alienates the individual would also help explain the lack of success current solutions have had in retaining teachers or improving satisfaction. It gives insight into why the idea of creating incentives for teachers to stay with the profession have been ineffective. If the job itself were the problem and nothing was being done to fix the job, incentives for people to stay would merely act as a Band-Aid. Offering advanced degrees, higher salaries, or loan forgiveness would ultimately fail to retain teachers because, at the end of the day, they still have to deal with a system that is alienating and detrimental to their well being. It is not surprising, then, that these efforts have failed to solve the issue of retention. As Betty said in her interview, "You could pay me twenty grand more a year and I'd still dread my fourth period. My fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh. . ." It is my belief that there will never be an incentive great enough to retain teachers if they are forced to continue to work in alienating environments.

Ultimately, it becomes necessary to examine how we are approaching teacher dissatisfaction. Education must acknowledge that it is not the individual that is the problem; rather, the perpetrator is the alienating nature of the modern educational work environment. Using alienation and empowerment make it possible to view this problem from a completely new lens. The question is no longer about how to fix people who enter and suffer in an oppressive environment. Instead, educators can analyze what factors make the teaching environment oppressive and replace them with empowering ones (see Figure 2). As new information and

understanding become part of dialogue surrounding teacher dissatisfaction, I believe what constitutes dissatisfying conditions and why teachers react in the way they do will be done with a higher sense of clarity. I also believe that correctly identifying the system itself as the problem creates a possibility for change because educators are no longer trying to change people to fit a system, which is a fundamentally dehumanizing act. Rather, the focus becomes on changing the system in order to ensure that the people working within it have the chance to empower themselves to be the educators they set out to be. And, on the practical level, altering a broken system seems to be a much more ascertainable goal when compared to trying to change people in order to have them find satisfaction while working in an environment that alienates and oppresses them. Ultimately, educational work environments, while large and complex, are human creations that can be altered by human intervention if those working within it choose to do so.

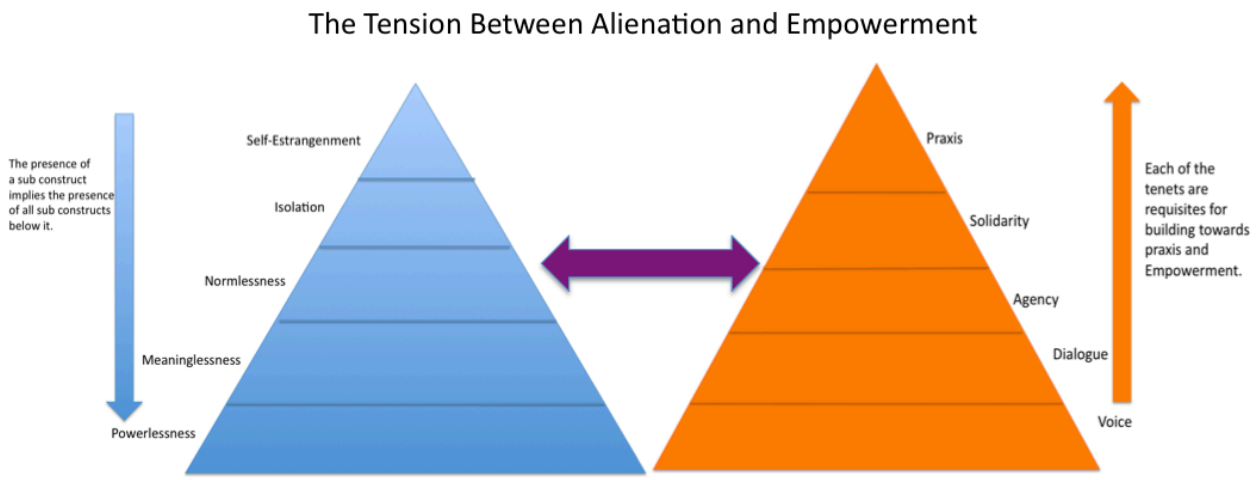

Figure 2. The tension between alienation and empowerment.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Study

There is no question that the problem of teacher dissatisfaction is a powerful force within the education system (Hargreaves, 1994). There has been extensive research and numerous studies attempting to identify and solve teacher dissatisfaction in the work environment (Curtis, 2012; Greenglass & Burke, 2003; Hargreaves, 1994; Ingersoll, 2001; Lindqvist et al., 2014). While the research has accurately identified the conditions that cause dissatisfaction in education, there have been few meaningful answers for addressing these conditions, if any at all. Furthermore, what makes these conditions so difficult to address is the fact that there seems to be no commonality that connects the conditions together. Administrative support, salary, working conditions, and colleague interaction appear to be vastly different issues and would seem to require completely separate solutions to be addressed. This has made teacher dissatisfaction an incredibly difficult topic to attend to (Litt & Turk, 2001).

While there is extensive literature on both teacher dissatisfaction and alienation, no literature exists to empirically explain how they may be related. In order to explore the possible connection between the two phenomena, I used literature concerning teacher dissatisfaction to identify the most common sources among educators. I then interviewed six teachers about their experiences. Using literature that discussed alienation, I created a system to connect alienation with teacher narratives about their work environments. I found the presence of alienation in every experience that the interviewees shared. After creating a write-up detailing the connection between alienation and their experiences, I interviewed the participants about my findings.

Teachers were then asked about the accuracy of the finding as well as the implications for the connection. The participants not only agreed with the findings, they found that the connection helped them build a sense of clarity with respect to their own experiences of dissatisfaction. The connection also helped frame the emotional component of the teachers' experience within the context of the work environment. Participants expressed finding a sense of validation for their feelings when they had previously been unable to justify them. Through this research, alienation has been identified as a phenomenon that undergirds all forms of dissatisfaction and plays a crucial role in the way working conditions affect teachers.

Key Findings

Possible Source of Alienation

The findings from this study point to the likelihood that there exists a strong connection between alienation and dissatisfaction. The presence of alienation within conditions of teacher dissatisfaction has serious implications for the field of education. As educational leadership attempts to address the problem of teacher dissatisfaction and its corresponding effects on retention, burnout, and isolation, how working conditions influence teachers at the personal level must be taken into account. This study points to the strong possibility that teachers' reactions to dissatisfying conditions are not necessarily due to the conditions themselves. Rather they are the effect of how conditions deny a teacher the ability to actualize him or herself as an effective educator. The more a teacher is alienated from their perception of the job, the more likely they are to experience negative consequences. The implications of this mean that solutions to teacher dissatisfaction, burnout, retention, and isolation must acknowledge the human side of teachers as well as the structural dimensions of the work environment.

In current models of education throughout the United States, educational reform focuses on metrics, efficiency, and achievement (Cochran-Smith & Lylte, 2014). Not surprisingly, as education continues to pursue these educational ideals, teacher dissatisfaction has also increased. As research has attempted to identify the sources of teacher dissatisfaction and give possible solutions, the ways in which the reforms were created and implemented have rarely been taken into account. Narrow-sighted vision has led to achievement and measured success being the only goals to be considered as reforms are built and pushed into practice (Bracey, 2004; Meier &Wood, 2004). It is not a stretch to imagine how reforms that ignore potential negative impacts on teachers as laborers may very well create conditions teachers find undesirable. By failing to take into account the ways in which the reforms affect the people who are on the front lines of education, the process of educational reform may be at the root of teacher dissatisfaction.

Consequently, only changes that take into consideration the impact they might have on teachers as workers can solve the issue of teacher dissatisfaction. When discussing dissatisfying conditions such as administrative support, salary, colleague interaction or workload, it becomes imperative to understand how they play a role in a teacher's ability to find satisfaction as an educator. The only viable solutions will come about when creators of education reform, whether it be at the state, district or site level, become cognizant of how their decisions impact teachers as laborers. However, to properly meet this condition, educational leadership must ensure that teacher voice become a cornerstone in the process of change and that alienating conditions be replaced with empowering ones. Teachers cannot be seen as instruments to carry out the agenda of others (Seeman, 1959). They must be considered one of the most valuable participants in

reform and work environment creation, as well as individuals whose well-being must be considered as a paramount concern.

Limiting Alienation

The research seemed to indicate that the subconstructs of alienation are not separate concepts. Rather, they can be viewed as different stages that an individual goes through as they experience alienation. As a person experiences each next step in alienation, the feelings from the previous subconstructs remain. The higher an individual moves on the hierarchy, the stronger the alienation becomes. When an individual reaches normlessness, isolation or self- estrangement, there is a high probability that their dissatisfaction and frustration with working conditions will become a primary attribute connected with their work. As frustration becomes a primary feeling associated with the job, there's an increased danger to a person's well-being and a likelihood of disengagement or resistance.

It may be possible, then, to avoid conditions that cause normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement by addressing issues while they are still in the powerlessness or meaninglessness stages. In these stages, it is still possible to address conditions before they cause serious emotional damage to workers. The prerequisite for this is being able to identify conditions that could possibly be sources of alienation before they become established as part of the work environment. Early identification may allow for augmenting conditions so as to avoid or minimize alienation.

Alienation and Veteran Teachers

In many ways, alienation has become a staple of the educational culture. It is highly likely that most teachers have accepted it as part of the job even if they are not actively cognizant

of its existence. This makes it a difficult phenomenon to combat. Educators who wish to address alienation in the workplace must acknowledge the influence and pervasiveness it has with veteran staff. Prolonged exposure to alienation may very well be the source of resistance and the incredulous attitude many teachers harbor toward school reform. Even more, the consequences of alienation must be viewed as long-term, detrimental effects that have ultimately victimized teachers. As with any form of conditioning, any attempt to break the effects of alienation will take time, patience, and effort.

Empowerment and Inclusion

I have noted that the inclusion of teachers in the process of building and carrying out the education environment is the only way to combat the effects of alienation and dissatisfaction. As every dissatisfying condition found within the teachers' narratives indicated a sense of powerlessness, it could be argued that all forms of dissatisfaction start from a point of powerlessness. The denial of power and control over a working environment that defines oppression seems be the root of teacher dissatisfaction. Thus, engaging tenets of empowerment as they relate to teachers and the educational environment must be a foundational part of any action that seeks to eliminate alienation and dissatisfaction.

Limitations

The main limiting factor of this research is the fact that there was no existing literature that connected alienation and teacher dissatisfaction. I had to apply the subconstructs of alienation to the experiences from the narratives using my own criteria. While I stated the criteria for why experiences were categorized into each subconstruct, the rationale for the categorization could be challenged. In order to ensure that the categorization was as accurate as possible, I gave

participants the opportunity to read over the subconstructs of alienation, the criteria that I used to categorize the experiences, and the analysis of the connection between their experiences and alienation. Participants were then asked to comment on whether or not they felt that the connections I made were accurate from their perspective. All six participants agreed with the analysis and believed that the subconstructs accurately portrayed their emotions in relation to the corresponding working conditions.

Recommendations for Further Research

Dissatisfaction

The current research on conditions of teacher dissatisfaction is extensive. However, as I created the interview protocol in order to elicit stories about participants' experiences with dissatisfaction, it became apparent that the majority of research surrounding teacher dissatisfaction paints the issue with too broad of a brush. For example, administrative support is universally said to be one of the top conditions of teacher dissatisfaction. The problem that I ran into was the numerous ways in which teachers experienced dissatisfaction with administrative support. It became necessary to create sub categories to the main topics of dissatisfaction as the information was analyzed. Subcategories such as communication, predictability, competence, and organization were just a few that emerged from the administrative support data. I realized how the inability to drill down to the nuances of each category of dissatisfaction made it difficult to engage them. I recommend that more detailed research be done on areas of dissatisfaction so that broad sweeping categories like administrative support, work load, salary, and so forth can be better identified, discussed, and acted upon.

Vocabulary and Language

I had hoped to code teachers' language in attempt to match various words and phrases with the different subcategories of alienation. However, because of the informal and emotionally charged ways that teachers spoke about their experiences with dissatisfying conditions, few determinations could be made. Because expressions of alienation often engage the emotional side of a person, it was not surprising to find the ways that each of the teachers expressed their feelings greatly differed. While there were certain similarities that could be seen across all participants (e.g., cursing, idiomatic expressions, etc.), the similarities often indicated different meanings for each participant. For example, the use of a curse word could indicate extreme frustration for one teacher but simply be a chosen adjective with no emotional attachment for another. I had to rely on the face-to-face interviews in order to gather emotional clues through body language, inflection, and personal speech styles in order to categorize their experiences into the subconstructs of alienation.

I recommend two possible ways to improve the identification of frustration and alienation within teacher speech patterns. First, it seems possible to create a word and phrase bank by interviewing the participants directly about their word choices as they described their emotional state. By directly speaking with participants about their word choice, it may be possible to begin to categorize how language could be connected to the different subcategories of alienation. This may be possible to do after the connections to alienation have been made and participants have been able to analyze their word choice in relation to their experiences of alienation.

Second, I suggest attempting to create a workplace language list of words and phrases that might indicate the presence of alienation. While it was invaluable and powerful to listen to

the teachers speak openly and honestly about their experiences of dissatisfaction, it must be noted that teachers' comfort with me played a large role in how they spoke about their experiences. The casualness of their speech patterns made it easy to identify and categorize the raw, honest emotions as they discussed their work conditions. However, if teachers had to speak using workplace appropriate language, it would be much more difficult to identify the emotional impact of dissatisfying conditions. It would be an invaluable tool to be able to identify workplace words and phrases that might hint at the presence of alienation. In order to accomplish this, I suggest having teachers who have gone through the interview process and spoken openly about dissatisfaction return to their transcripts an attempt to rephrase their interviews in a work-appropriate manner while attempting to maintain their expressed frustration. This exercise could be used to help teachers as they negotiate the gap between maintaining workplace etiquette and expressing their true feelings about working conditions. It could also allow for the possibility to identify areas of dissatisfaction and alienation in shared experiences when an individual attempts to maintain an emotionally neutral, workplace appropriate tone.

Multiple Teachers from the Same Site

As teachers discussed dissatisfying conditions throughout the interview process, it became apparent that they were highlighting concerns they had at the school site level more than anything else. Many times teachers would speak about dissatisfying conditions in a way that made me feel that the interviewees were speaking not only for themselves, but for a large portion of their colleagues as well. While the interview pinpointed concerns on the individual level, I felt that if the same process were repeated with colleagues of the interviewees, there was a high

probability of finding similar feelings of dissatisfaction and alienation concerning the shared work environment.

The importance of this possibility cannot be understated. If the interview process could be carried out with teachers from the same site, department, or district, it could be possible to identify common themes of dissatisfaction, as well as the categorize the degree to which these conditions were negatively affecting the staff. At the very least, school sites would have information from their teachers about unfavorable working conditions. Ideally, however, school and district administration would be able to identify areas causing their teachers to experience dissatisfaction and intervene with the intention of solving or mitigating these conditions. By interviewing the entire staff of a given environment, a data set could be created and used as a way to accurately identify detrimental teaching conditions within an environment. The connection to alienation could help in prioritizing issues that are having the greatest negative impact on teachers. And, more importantly, addressing alienation would add a human component to the educational workplace that requires new, innovative solutions in order take the human aspect of teaching into account as solutions are developed and implemented.

EPILOGUE

A PERSONAL STORY OF ALIEANTION

The topic of teacher alienation for this dissertation began as many research ideas do. I had broad concepts about what I wanted to study but all of my ideas were far too large in scope to successfully complete in the time an EdD program allowed. Throughout much of my second year in the program, I struggled to narrow my research goals. As I continued to develop my research topic, I spent my days working for a charter organization in Los Angeles. This organization had a unique educational model and claimed to champion the ideals of social consciousness and responsibility. It seemed to be a perfect fit for a teacher who was in an EdD program that focused on leadership in social justice. Little did I know that my future research topic and experiences with this organization would intersect to create one of the most enlightening (and frustrating) experiences of my life.

Early in Spring 2014, the doctoral students were required to give preliminary benchmark presentations of their research topic. I had arrived at the university around six and was the last of the group to present. After completing the 15-minute presentation, I was required to answer questions from a group of professors. During one of the professor's questions, I became dizzy and the professor’s voice appeared to echo. As my vision began to blur, I was able to get to a half sitting position on a cabinet behind me before I lost consciousness. Luckily Scott, one of my cohort members, saw me fainting and was able to break my fall before I hit the ground. I awoke to the professors, peers, and public safety huddled over me. Adding to my embarrassment, the Los Angeles Fire Department would arrive a short time later. After a bout of profuse sweating

and having my vitals checked, I was able to assure both the firefighters and staff that I was okay and was given a ride home.

Over the next few days, I thought about what had caused me to lose consciousness during the presentation. While I was a bit nervous, I felt nothing more than minor butterflies. I had not eaten between lunch and the presentation but I had never experienced anything nearly as extreme as a result of not eating for six hours. I was also in excellent physical shape to the point where the firefighters wanted me to go to the hospital when they detected a low heart rate when they checked my vital signs. I had to explain that my resting heart rate was low due to the amount I exercised.

Eventually my thoughts began to linger on the possible effects work might be having on me. It was at that point that I realized how much energy I had been putting into running the curriculum side of my site. Due to some unfortunate turn of events, I had been left as the only full time teacher at a site that should have been run by three. There was a substitute teacher to pick up some of the slack but I found myself running almost every classroom related aspect. My preliminary benchmark presentation happened to coincide with a major project that students were being asked to complete. During the few weeks that led up to the presentation, I was attempting to guide fifty students through this major project by myself. I also had to film each student's project, a task that took anywhere from an hour to an hour and half. Upon reflection, it became apparent that I had been running myself into the ground at school and my fainting had been a result of my body giving out due to sheer exhaustion. With the summer quickly approaching, I knew I would be able to rest and recover and that my situation of having to undertake the work of three teachers would soon be a distant memory.

The next year began and I found myself joining the curriculum development team at school. I had been excited to join them and thought that I would have a lot to contribute. However, I found myself actually becoming frustrated with the way they operated. They seemed to be unprofessional in their methods and I soon began to perceive a level of incompetence with their ability to set and lead the curriculum development and implementation for the school. As time passed, I began to resent who we were as a leadership team because our lack of ability to effectively carry out our job was proving to be detrimental to the staff we were supposed to be serving.

This frustration corresponded with the feeling that the relationship between my site administration and me was deteriorating. Where there seemed to be good teamwork and shared responsibility the previous year, I now sensed a level of authoritarianism. I personally felt as if my work, skills, and leadership were being used to forward someone else's agenda. I used to feel like I was leading but I now felt like I was towing the line for others. What was worse was knowing that those who could have stepped in to intervene during the previous year when I was running myself ragged would, once again, leave me to fend for myself rather than assist me with this problem.

I felt myself becoming more and more frustrated with my working conditions. My position in leadership allowed me to see teachers struggling and an administration that was either unwilling or lacking the competence to act accordingly. As a teacher, I felt that I that I was being leaned on too heavily and required to make all of the decisions regarding the direction of my site's educational program. Of course, if my decisions were not deemed acceptable, I would be expected to formulate new ones.

I found myself becoming snippier with my language and wanting nothing more than to go home at the end of the day. I ended up quitting the curriculum leadership team because I could not be a part of a leadership group that I found to be detriment to its staff's well being. I isolated myself during professional developments and chose not to engage other teachers, unless absolutely necessary. I did, however, continue to try to open dialogue with administration throughout this growing sense of frustration. However, similar to participants in this study, my attempts were always to no avail for almost seven months. Looking back, it was almost comical to think about the amount of times someone would schedule time to meet with me then cancel. I spoke with old friends and colleagues about the numerous complaints that I had and tried to seek advice about how to make it through the year. Unfortunately, no one could offer any form of support that could positively impact my situation. I had always been a teacher who was strong willed and driven, but now I was gaining a reputation for being standoffish and difficult to work with. And then it happened.

After a long day off campus with students, my site administrator told us that we had to go back to the campus to plan. It should be known that the site administrator does not have direct control over the teachers. Site administrators are in charge of running site related duties and teachers are only accountable to school administration. After confirming that school administration did not mandate us to return to school, I voiced to the site administrator that we had not been told by the school administration that we had to return to school and therefore we should be allowed to go home. She said that she was in charge and that she expected to see us back at the site. Being in front of students, I chose not to engage her further until we returned to the site. Once we returned and students had left, I once again expressed my frustration with her

demands as well as challenged her claim about how much control she had over us. This site administrator was known to take an extremely demeaning tone with people she was chastising. I had been on the end of it once and had had a serious conversation with her, explaining that she was not to speak to me in that way again. That initial conversation ended well and she, while often taking that tone with others, was careful never to direct it towards me. However, as her frustration came to a peak, it crept back into her voice.

Hearing the degrading quality in her tone made me snap. I ended up screaming at her while she stood less than two feet from me. To this day I cannot quite remember what I said but I do remember a complete look of shock on her face. Another staff member who witnessed my outburst told me that I explained why I was so frustrated with her. I just happened to do it at the top of my lungs. There were no insults, no cursing, or anything else in my voice. It was simply utter frustration. To this day, that administrator was the only person that I have ever yelled at in a workplace setting, minus the occasional eighth-grade student who's acting like a dummy.

After carefully considering my options over that weekend, it became clear that I was working in an extremely toxic environment and experiencing a great deal of stress. After making sure that I was financially stable enough to make it through the rest of the school year, I chose to resign from my position. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. But the question of what caused such an out-of-character reaction still remained. As a teacher, I had been angry, sad, and frustrated before but those feelings had never elicited anything close to what I experienced that day. Furthermore, I had experienced those same powerful feelings in my personal life. But even there they did not have the same effect. So what the heck happened to cause me to snap?

It was not until I started to connect alienation and dissatisfaction in this dissertation that a possible explanation began to emerge. Instead of looking at conditions that had dissatisfied me as simply working conditions, I looked at how they affected me on a personal level. I had wanted to be a teacher for as long as I can remember and it is something that I have always been very passionate about. It was and still is, quite literally, something that defines me as a person. As I analyzed the different conditions that led to my feelings of frustration and connected them to alienation, my actions and the demeanor that I had been displaying at my school suddenly made sense. Who I was as a person and who I was as a teacher were one in the same and my working conditions had worn me down at both the personal and professional level. Using alienation had given me a new way to view my situation and things became much more clear.

Unfortunately, rather than giving me a piece of mind and closure, I became angry and depressed. Every time I tried to write about the topics of alienation and dissatisfaction for the dissertation, my mind would draw parallels to my experiences and I would become excessively frustrated and would have to stop. I even got to the point where I knew that any engagement with my topic would generate anger. For two months I actively avoided doing any work on the dissertation because I hated the way it elicited negative emotions. Only after two months was I able to push past my block and continue to work towards completing the research.

I created this dissertation to explore the connections between alienation and conditions of dissatisfaction. Little did I know that I would find myself suffering from the very phenomenon I was researching. While the connections I made led me to experience one of the more difficult points in my life, the understanding that grew from those experiences was invaluable to understanding the relationship between alienation and dissatisfaction. Furthermore, my personal

experiences with the topic have shown me the powerful effect alienation can have on teachers. I believe that my personal experience, supported by the findings of this study, allow me to argue with confidence that taking alienation into account is vital to understanding the impact that the educational work environment has on teachers' satisfaction and their well being as humans.

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Set 1 Purpose: To understand what factors caused participant to want to enter the teaching profession and explain their personal beliefs about the job. Answers will be used to compare against conditions that either support or deny the teacher the ability to actualize their responses, as well as compared to proposed changes to the work environment.

1.) Why did you want to become a teacher?

2.) What do you find rewarding about being a teacher?

3.) What is your teaching philosophy?

4.) What do you believe to be the purpose of education?

Set 2 Purpose: Identify areas that cause dissatisfaction for the teacher. Questions will start open ended but will touch on standard causes of dissatisfaction if participant doesn't discuss them on his/her own.

1) How satisfied would you say you are with your work as a teacher?

2) What aspects of teaching do you find satisfying and why?

3) What aspects of teaching do you not find satisfying and why?

4.) Are there aspects or concerns about being a teacher in today's society that frustrate you?

5.) Are there any specific situations/conditions/procedures of being a teacher that make your work difficult as a teacher?

6.) What is your sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the following and why?

A.) Administrative Support/District Support

B.) Teacher salary

C.) Work load/work hours

D.) How you're perceived by those not in education

E.) NCLB and Common Core (or any other mandated program at your site)

D.) Teacher interaction at your school site

F.) How much personal control you have over your profession

7.) Have you faced particular concerns or frustrations in the past, related to your work as a teacher? How did you deal with these? Please be specific.

Set 3 Purpose: Identify ways in which teacher would reconceptualize their work environment.

1. If you could make any changes to the teaching work environment, what changes would you make and why?

2. In what ways do you think that these changes would improve teacher satisfaction?

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