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Are the Teachers Alright?: High School Teachers' Use of Emotional Labor Strategies in the COVID-19 Context and its Effect on the Profession's Sustainability

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by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Joseph Ryan, who joined us earth-side at the time of this study's completion.

Joseph, you are the son, grandson, and great-grandson of change-makers—doctors, lawyers, scientists, educators, dreamers—who envisioned and worked towards a more compassionate, unified, equitable, and peaceful world for you. Never underestimate of what you are capable.

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ABSTRACT

Are the Teachers Alright?: An Investigation into High School Teachers' Use of Emotional Labor in the COVID-19 Context and its Role in their Professional Experiences

by

Nina C. Benegas

Teacher burnout during the pandemic has resulted in a mass exodus of teachers that, compounded with consistently low enrollment in teacher preparation programs, has caused a severe and catastrophic teacher shortage. This qualitative study investigated teacher perceptions of pandemic-related workload and emotional stress and their effects on job satisfaction and burnout. The dissertation study consisted of semi-structured interviews of sixteen current or former high school educators who taught before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings suggest a wide range of disruptions to teachers' preexisting professional responsibilities and additions to what has been considered to constitute a teacher's typical workload, particularly: increased logistical responsibility without correlating support; lack of consistent and transparent communication between teachers and administrators regarding protocols and expectations, and erosion of meaningful interactions with students. Findings reveal an overall inefficacy of current emotional labor strategies to stave off burnout and job dissatisfaction, largely due to outdated and gendered expectations for teacher behavior and emotional expression. Findings culminate in a graphic describing relationship between teachers' professional experiences and changes to occupational workload during the pandemic and their subsequent job satisfaction. The findings suggest the need for school leaders to prioritize teacher training to better support teacher mental health, introduce an equity audit process to explore and identify outdated expectations for teacher

emotional display rules, and leverage interpersonal relationships between teachers to strengthen research practices on teacher retention and wellbeing.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Teaching is a stressful career. Besides the intellectual demands necessary for developing age-appropriate, rigorous curricula, teachers also tackle the daily face-to-face interactions with students, addressing emotional and social needs—oftentimes with more frequency than they address academic concerns. Educational researchers and practitioners first raised the alarm over the disastrous effects of working conditions for teachers over a century ago, with a 1918 publication of *The Journal of Education* stating, "That too low salaries for grade teachers are forcing a teacher shortage and otherwise injuring schools will soon be everywhere recognized" (Teacher shortage in number and quality,1918).

Trends in teacher occupational satisfaction and retention continued over the next hundred years to correlate closely with national crises, such as World War II and the Great Recession of 2008. In the years immediately preceding the end of World War II, teacher education institutions recorded an over 20% decrease in enrollment, while hundreds of teachers left the profession to join the war effort or seek higher wages in business and industry (Endicott & Rosencrance, 1943). During the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009, schools laid off tens of thousands of teachers due to budget cuts, but as the economy recovered from 2009 to 2011, schools slowly reinstated previously eliminated programs and positions, only to find the teacher surplus of the recession mitigated by high teacher attrition and low enrollment in teacher preparation programs nationwide (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Though working conditions and salaries for teachers have remained stagnant in their inadequacy for the profession's modern lifespan, acknowledgement and debate over the struggles

and stressors teachers face tend to surface in the public discourse during times of national upheaval, and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and subsequent Great Resignation (Parker & Horowitz, 2022) promised to follow the same pattern.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic caused temporary school closures en masse, beginning in March 2020, forcing teachers and students alike to pivot their pedagogical and scholarly practices. On Friday, March 13, 2020, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency in response to the global concern over the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, a strand of the coronavirus family that can lead to the disease now most commonly known as COVID-19 (Cedars Sinai, 2020). Over the next 12 days, every U.S. state either ordered or recommended closures of schools in an effort to stymie the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Across 124,000 U.S. public and private schools, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the in-person education of over 55.1 million students in grades K-12 (Education Week, 2020, March 7), including that of the 24,000 students in the North Shore district of Washington State, whose school had already shifted to distance learning on March 5 (Education Week, 2020, July 2).

Schools were not the only institutions affected—in an effort to minimize the transmission of the virus between individuals, 42 U.S. states and territories issued mandatory stay-at-home orders to decrease population movement (Moreland, 2020). Aside from "essential" or "critical infrastructure" workers, such as healthcare personnel, first responders, and grocery store staff (Honein, 2020), the American workforce largely stayed home, as businesses either temporarily closed or pivoted to a virtual platform.

School closures varied across the United States for the entirety of the pandemic. Over the course of the 2020-2021 academic year, some state governors, such as those from Iowa and Oregon, mandated that their states' schools offer full or part-time in-person instruction to students; other state governments, like those from South Dakota and Maryland, left decisions on reopening schools up to local school districts and public health officials (Education Week, 2020, July 28). California's Governor, Gavin Newsom, announced the requirements for schools to reopen for in-person instruction: Each county in California would need to demonstrate stabilization of both new infections and hospitalizations (Cano, 2020). Once a vaccine against COVID-19 became widely available in spring 2021, mandatory inoculations entered the conversation concerning school reopenings, along with mask mandates and physical distancing logistics.[1]

Across the country, teachers experienced the pandemic differently, with some teaching fully online for the entirety of the 2020-2021 academic year, some teaching in-person with some students accessing class via video conferencing from their homes, and some teaching fully in person and contending with staff and teacher shortages due to illness and quarantine requirements. Teachers, administrators, staff, students, and families adapted their notions of education to account for rising cases and increasing uncertainty about the trajectory of the pandemic.

[1] As of March 28, 2022, five states had a student COVID-19 vaccination requirement, with 11 states requiring the vaccine for school faculty and staff. Conversely, 18 states had a ban on student COVID-19 vaccination requirements, with 12 states banning vaccine mandates for school faculty and staff. Eight states had a ban on student mask mandates (National Academy for State Health Policy [NASHP], 2022).

George Floyd and #BlackLivesMatter

When the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in the United States, 46-year-old George Floyd lost his job in the restaurant industry. On May 25, 2020, just over two months since the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a pandemic, a store clerk called the Minneapolis police and accused Floyd of using a counterfeit $20 bill. After pulling Floyd from his car, handcuffing him, and moving him towards the back seat of their squad car, Floyd resisted—citing his claustrophobia—and expressed his intention to lie on the ground. Three of the officers pinned Floyd face down on the pavement and Officer Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes until he died (Taylor, 2021). Seventeen-year-old Darnella Frazier captured the arrest and murder on her cell phone camera. The video went viral and provided key evidence that contradicted Chauvin's claims that Floyd's death was due to the victim's medical preconditions and drug use (Cohen, 2021). In April 2021, a jury convicted Chauvin of second-degree murder. Two months later, a judge sentenced Chauvin to 22.5 years in prison (Sanchez & Levenson, 2021).

George Floyd's murder at the hands of police ignited protests in Minneapolis. The outrage gained traction and support nationwide as tens of thousands of protestors demanded justice in 140 U.S. cities. Floyd's cries of, "I Can't Breathe" became a rallying call to action within the larger Black Lives Matter movement, which started in 2014 following the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin (Taylor, 2021). Protestors called not only for Chauvin's punishment, but also for widespread reforms to dismantle systemic racism, such as defunding certain police operations and reallocating money to resources and services for mental health and social services.

Though George Floyd was approaching 50 years old when he was murdered, it was young people, particularly from the demographic bracket known as Generation Z, or "Gen Z," who led many of the local protests in his memory. High school and college-aged students especially found themselves weary from waiting for substantive change and used the resources at their disposal, namely social media platforms like Twitter (www.twitter.com), TikTok (www.tiktok.com), and Instagram (www.instagram.com), to organize and mobilize protests and activism efforts from Berkeley to Baltimore (Bryant, 2020; Janfaza, 2021). Professional athletes, celebrities, and politicians made the outrage and grief expressed during the mounting protests even more visible, using their own social media platforms to raise awareness and funds for activist causes (Moniuszko, 2020) and their positions on primetime television to encourage legislative action in Congress (Hill, 2021).

Protests, dialogues, proposals, and demands within the year following George Floyd's murder highlighted and heightened awareness surrounding the continued American tradition of systemic racism, but the COVID-19 pandemic did not disappear from hospital beds and blank Zoom (www.zoom.us) screens, even if its importance seemingly diminished when faced with competition in the 24-hour news cycle. School leaders and teachers ended the 2019-2020 academic year wondering how to address national discourse on George Floyd, systemic racism, and police brutality when their students were discovering not only how to learn exclusively online, but also how to survive within the isolation and confusion of the pandemic-related mandates. The tumultuous academic year was also waning, with schools just weeks away from releasing students for summer break. Classroom teachers reached out to students and families,

facilitated intentional discussions, and led social justice fundraising efforts (Ferlazzo, 2020; Fink, 2020).

Effects on Students

The COVID-19 pandemic had profound impacts on students, both academically and social-emotionally. Parents, school staff, and policy makers sounded a consistent alarm during the distance learning period: Students were profoundly struggling (Jones et al., 2021; Tambunan et al., 2021; Walters et al., 2021). Physically isolated from friends, disconnected from teachers and educational supports, concerned about their safety and the safety of those around them, school closures forced students to navigate the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism at home, through a screen, and often alone. Millions of children already suffered from anxiety and depression before the COVID-19 pandemic began, with a 40% increase from 2009 to 2018 in feelings of persistent sadness or hopelessness in high schoolers. In 2019, incidents of suicidal ideation also saw a steep increase, with one in six high schoolers reporting that they made a suicide plan (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2021).

With school-based mental health supports—such as counseling and social services—remote during the distance learning interim, concern about student suicide risk increased (Brock et al., 2021), as did apprehension over the state of students' general mental health and emotional wellbeing. The pandemic upended students' routines, peer interactions, and—often—their families' financial circumstances.

These adverse effects disproportionately impacted economically and racially marginalized communities, highlighting the pervasive nature of systemic racism in times of national and global crisis (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The pandemic and subsequent

shutdowns and restrictions particularly affected low-income workers and workers of color, who are disproportionately represented in industries and occupations impacted. Members of the Asian American community, regardless of economic or class status, also experienced heightened racism in the form of vitriolic and often violent attacks in response to COVID-19's theorized origins in Wuhan, China (Kantamneni, 2020). Discourse continued surrounding George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement left Black students especially susceptible to racial stress and trauma—enduring race-based experiences that may lead to chronic stress—as they witnessed, often in school, debates on their very right to exist (Jones, 2021). Psychologists warned educators and counselors to expect heightened anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, loss, and even increased cases of child abuse and neglect (Styck et al., 2021; Weir, 2020).

Despite the release and widespread availability of a COVID-19 vaccine beginning in Spring 2021, the pandemic did not subside in preparation for the 2021-2022 academic year, and preventative safety measures and protocols to stymie the spread of the virus—and its variants—continued to affect school operations globally. Schools in all 50 states returned to in-person instruction with varied commitments to mask and vaccination mandates for students and staff (The Hunt Institute, 2021).

Social Emotional Learning

Upon returning to in-person instruction, the demand and emphasis on social and emotional learning became a central concern for educators and school staff. Teachers reported feelings of being overwhelmed and fatigued in meeting the social and emotional needs of students (Varghese & Natsuaki, 2021). Social emotional learning (SEL), or emotional intelligence (EI), became popular in the late 1990s as a method by which to teach foundational,

non-academic skills that students would need to be successful in their post-secondary lives (Cherniss et al., 2006; Elias et al., 1997; Goleman, 1995).

Research suggested benefits of incorporating SEL into daily school practices for both students and teachers. Benefits for students included increased academic performance, improved classroom behavior, increased ability to manage adverse emotions, and improved attitudes towards themselves, their peers, and their school experience (Durlak, 2011; Duncan et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2017; Muratori et al., 2017). Social-emotional skill development in childhood and adolescence was a strong predictor of healthy social-emotional wellbeing in adulthood (Jones et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2017). Educators, particularly teachers and school leadership, also saw benefits from having well-developed, social-emotional competency, including positive affect, decreased feelings of burnout, and better communication skills (Brackett et al., 2010; Oliveira et al., 2021; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Over the course of the pandemic, SEL programming became more popular in schools. Since the start of the pandemic, the percentage of educators familiar with SEL rose from 83% in 2018 to 94% in 2021, and the percentage of schools implementing standalone SEL programs had increased from 16% in 2018 to 34% in 2021. Additionally, 82% of parents expressed that SEL development was of even greater importance within school curricula since the start of the pandemic (McGraw Hill, 2021). The U.S. Surgeon General published an advisory one year into the pandemic, calling on schools to prioritize SEL curricula to support student mental health and wellness (U.S. Public Health Service, 2021).

Teacher Attrition Crisis

Despite increased awareness of and advocacy for SEL in schools, SEL programming had not mitigated the stark increase in teachers exiting the profession. Staffing shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized a pre-existing teacher attrition crisis (Sweeney & McCabe, 1992) and contributed to the increase in teacher resignations between 2020 and 2022. Not all stressors found in the teaching profession were identified by teachers as contributing significantly to feelings of burnout. While dissatisfaction with compensation is rampant—especially since teachers are paid on average 19% less than are their college-educated peers with similar levels of experience in other professions (Allegretto & Mishel, 2020)—it is not typically identified by teachers as a predominant reason for their exit from the profession. Rather, prior to the pandemic, it was some type of dissatisfaction with the profession—administrative oversight, testing and accountability pressures, or overall working conditions—that teachers named as the primary reason behind their career change (Sutcher et al., 2016).

The pandemic exacerbated these concerns, and modified teachers' predominant reason for leaving the field. According to a report by the RAND corporation, authored by Diliberti et al. (2021), almost half of public-school teachers who chose to leave the profession after March 2020 and before their expected date of retirement did so due to the pandemic, with stress being the most common reason teachers cited for prematurely exiting the profession—cited twice as often as inadequate pay was mentioned (Diliberti et al., 2021). The most recent National Education Association (NEA) survey confirmed this statistic on a larger scale, reporting that more than half of its members, controlling for age and years of experience, plan to leave the teaching profession earlier than they had initially intended due to the pandemic (Jotkoff, 2022; National Education

Association [NEA], 2022b), far surpassing a 2018 projection from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) that 270,000 teachers would leave the profession each year from 2016 to 2026 (Torpey, 2018), and even surpassing a RAND corporation study, authored by Steiner and Woo (2021), from just one year prior, in January 2021, which found less than 25% of teachers reporting intent to leave the profession at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 academic year (Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Teachers were pointing to pandemic-era[2] occupational stress, particularly increased school-day asks, decreased resources, and consistently unclear health and safety expectations, as reasons they felt taken advantage of in the current educational quandary (Cantu, 2022; Comme, 2022; Graham, 2022; Greene, 2021; Rodriguez-Delgado et al., 2021; Streeter, 2021; Zedeck, 2021). The NEA (NEA, 2022a) survey asked its members about the impact of pandemic-related stressors on their feelings of burnout. 91% of NEA members reported that pandemic-related stress is a serious challenge for educators, and 90% reported that feelings of burnout was a serious problem amongst educators (NEA, 2022a). A study on teacher turnover intentions during the pandemic noted the most commonly provided reasons for considering leaving teaching—approaching retirement age, having to change instructional modes, and pandemic-related health concerns—as well as a discrepancy in the percentages of teachers considering leaving the profession and those actually leaving the profession, with teachers reporting that only 40% of

[2] The COVID-19 pandemic, or "pandemic era," for this study, referred to the period of time from the government-ordered closure of schools in March 2020 to the time of the study's writing. Interviews were conducted beginning in June 2022, so the "pandemic era" was in reference to approximately a 27–29-month window of time. "Pandemic-related" stressors referred to either stressors that were novel prior to March 2020 or stressors that existed before March 2020, but that one or more aspects of the pandemic exacerbated, worsened, or made more acute.

their colleagues who expressed consideration of leaving teaching due to COVID-19 indeed leaving during or at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 academic year (Zamarro et al., 2021).

Teachers identified different support systems for both teachers and students as means to prevent teacher burnout. When asked to provide their suggestions for what type of support would best address educator burnout, teachers most strongly supported—by over 90% each and presented here in order of level of support—interventions in: raising teacher salaries, providing additional mental health supports for students, hiring more teachers, hiring more support staff, and less paperwork (NEA, 2022a). Overall, teachers with supportive school environments fared better in the pandemic. Teachers' sense of efficacy, or effectiveness and success at their job, decreased only slightly in the transition from in-person to remote learning with an administration and colleagues who are perceived as supportive; conversely, teachers' sense of efficacy plummeted in the transition with an administration and colleagues they did not perceive as supportive (Kraft et al., 2021).

Dramatic staffing decreases have affected schools nationwide (Long, 2022). In March 2021, researchers from the Learning Policy Institute interviewed superintendents in California's eight largest districts; their findings revealed a drastic increase in resignations and retirements, and increasing concern over reports of teacher burnout over workload demands (Carver-Thomas et al., 2022). The researchers followed up in fall 2021 and found unusually high vacancies in these districts, a combination of continued teacher attrition and increased staffing needs due to physical distancing requirements and students' need for additional academic support services (Carver-Thomas et al., 2022). In Texas, Governor Greg Abbott requested a task force to address the current teacher shortage (Cantu, 2022; Comme, 2022) and in Virginia, school districts were

experimenting with strategies, such as increased early release days, to ease teacher workload and prevent burnout (Hammond, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

While the COVID-19 pandemic was certainly not the beginning of the teaching profession's retention crisis, it did exacerbate and highlight pre-existing conflicts dissuading teachers from retaining their positions in schools.

Occupational stress exploded for teachers in the pandemic era (Kush et al., 2022; Singer, 2020), with teacher attrition rising from a one out of every six pre-COVID-19 average to one in four at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 academic year (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Teachers described pandemic-era occupational stress, particularly increased school-day tasks, decreased resources, and consistently unclear health and safety expectations, as reasons they felt taken advantage of during the pandemic; the most prevalent stressor teachers named when asked to reflect back on the 2020-2021 academic year was addressing students' social emotional stress (Steiner & Woo, 2021). Teachers' roles and responsibilities expanded, and with each new COVID-era policy, mandate, and discovery, teachers were in a constant state of adaptation.

Teacher burnout during the pandemic resulted in a mass exodus of teachers that, compounded with consistently low enrollment in teacher preparation programs, has caused a severe and catastrophic teacher shortage (Long, 2022; Sutcher et al., 2016). Even studies on emotional labor written after or during the COVID-19 pandemic mentioned the pandemic only as a limitation to the respective inquiry's methodology, rather than as its own factor affecting an individual's experience with emotional labor. This study considered the pandemic as a distinct factor in teachers' perceptions of their emotional labor and institutions' display rules.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions of pandemic-related workload and emotional stress. To determine this, the study focused on emotional labor: how individuals manage their emotions under stressful conditions to meet their workplace's occupational expectations (Hochschild & Drescher, 1983). The study aimed to explore not only how teachers' workplace conditions have changed throughout the pandemic, but also how their use of emotional labor strategies in response to these stressors affected their feelings of job satisfaction and burnout. This work analyzed the effects of novel, pandemic-related stressors on teachers' emotional labor strategies, and then analyzed the effectiveness of these strategies in curbing professional stress and burnout. By identifying the emotional labor strategies that teachers used and the effects on their perceived efficacy and professional satisfaction, school leaders and teacher preparation programs will be better equipped to support teachers through the COVID-19 pandemic and future adverse events and address the worsening teacher retention and shortage crisis.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided the study to come:

1. What stressors—new or exacerbated—do teachers perceive in their profession during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' emotional labor strategies?
3. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' job satisfaction and feelings of burnout?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study referenced two distinct frameworks to more accurately define and characterize the nature of teachers' occupational stressors and their emotional responses to said stressors. The first was Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers and the second was The Danielson Group's (2019) Framework for Teaching[3] (see Appendix B for Framework; used with permission; see Appendix A).

The first framework used in this study provided the vocabulary necessary to describe the aforementioned management of emotions across a spectrum of situations. Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework distinguished between naturally felt emotions, deep acting, and surface acting as reactions deemed organizationally acceptable in the workplace (Grandey, 2000). Hochschild and Drescher (1983) introduced the concept of emotional labor in his study of flight attendants and their ability to regulate their emotional responses to their occupational stress in accordance with the expectations of their employers, and studies of emotional labor in public-facing occupations has since expanded to examine the emotional labor of nurses (Chau et al., 2009; Gray, 2009), police officers (Schaible & Gecas, 2010), bank tellers, hospitality professionals (Lv et al., 2012), retail workers (Hur et al., 2021), and teachers (Brown et al., 2014; Hargreaves, 1998; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Kerr & Brown, 2016).

The second framework used in this study was The Danielson Group's (2019) Framework for Teaching (FFT), established in 1996 as a comprehensive metric used to identify, define, and share effective teaching practices. In addressing teacher burnout and attrition, it is crucial to

[3] The Danielson Group. (2019). *The Framework for Teaching.* Copyright 2019 by The Danielson Group. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

highlight teacher agency, since, as has been previously mentioned, teachers cited constant changes and lack of support as main areas of discontent in the profession (Fisher, 2011). The FFT outlined the responsibilities of the teaching profession and is still one of the most widely used and referenced observational systems for evaluating teacher effectiveness (Garrett & Steinberg, 2015), and thus established general professional standards for teachers before I introduced the stressors that impacted teachers' abilities to reach and maintain those standards. The Danielson Group (2020) did update the FFT in the 2020-2021 academic year to respond to the effects that COVID-19 and the national racial reckoning had on both students and their school environments. This updated, responsive framework is discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

The Danielson Group's (2019) Framework for Teaching (FFT) categorized teaching into Four Domains of Teaching Responsibility: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Each domain includes a series of components, broken down further into elements. In total, the FFTs four domains included 22 components and 76 elements. The FFT provided indicators of successful implementation for each component, as well as specific examples of practices at each level of evaluation (The Danielson Group, 2019). Though schools worldwide use the FFT for teacher evaluation and as an instructional tool, studies on the reliability of its scores and the validity of subsequent inferences on teaching performance yielded mixed results (Campoy & Xu, 2018; Kettler & Reddy, 2019). There was also lack of consensus on the FFTs connection, if any, to student achievement outcomes (Lash et al., 2016; Sartain et al., 2011). However, this study did not utilize the FFT as a tool for improving student outcomes; rather, the elements of the FFT provided the operational definitions

of the baseline of professional responsibilities teachers are generally expected to follow, regardless of discipline, or age of children taught, or type of school.

Method

Research Design

To answer the aforementioned research questions, I conducted a qualitative study of U.S. high school teachers focused on how teachers have been and are experiencing their professions during the pandemic. The study was qualitative, with an initial, descriptive questionnaire component.

Prior to scheduling the interview, participants completed a demographics questionnaire (see Appendix C) to establish their qualification for the study, collecting personal and professional data, such as gender, ethnicity, region, and years of teaching experience. The semi-structured interviews began with a fixed set of questions (see Appendix D) soliciting each participant's perceptions of both their experiences with pandemic-era professional stressors and their perceptions of their emotional labor strategies before and during the pandemic. Follow-up questions were reactive to the individual participant.

The study established internal validity through a member checking method, with follow-up communication taking place via email approximately 2-3 months after the initial interview (see Appendix E). Each participant had the chance to review both raw data and initial analyses, and were encouraged to collaborate with me in order to preserve the integrity of their testimony to the extent that is feasible when relying on participant memory.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

This research design left four limitations: the self-reported nature of participant recruitment, the possible self-selection of interested participants, the reliance on participant memory, and my own positionality. Participant qualifications were self-reported and not independently corroborated, so participants could have, feasibly, been dishonest about their meeting the criteria outlined in the recruitment email (see Appendix F). The nature of the topic—teacher stress during the pandemic—could have resulted in self-selecting participants, with those who experienced extensive stress in their careers more likely to respond with interest than those who experienced milder forms of pandemic-induced stress. Answers to interview questions relied on participant memory, which has the potential to be unreliable, especially when questions ask participants to recall their emotions from two years ago or more. And lastly, my positionality as an educator could have resulted in a bias, as I analyzed how classroom teachers like myself describe their emotions. There was a chance of my projecting my own professional pandemic experiences onto the study's participants.

This study also presented three delimitations: lack of randomization, lack of external validity, and exclusion of teachers who exited the profession during the pandemic. Since participants were recruited via my own professional and personal networks, certain regions of the United States are not represented equally as the northeast and southwest regions represented. All regions of the United States are represented except the northwest, but the majority of participants practice in California and Massachusetts. Efforts were made to solicit study participants representing as many ethnicities, genders, and ranges of years of experience as possible, but there was no further effort to control for a certain racial, ethnic, sex, or gender demographic of

the teacher. And lastly, the study design excluded teachers who left teaching or left their school site during the height of the pandemic. In attempting to compare teachers' experiences before and during the various phases of the pandemic, there was an opportunity lost to investigate direct causes of pandemic-era stressors on teacher attrition.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that occupational stress, or the stressors associated with a profession in the course of a given day, are challenging teachers to the point of a nationwide teacher shortage crisis. Research conducted at the start of the pandemic demonstrated that teachers' interactions with students contribute to this stress: Students' emotional stress impacts teachers (Steiner & Woo, 2021). However, what this study contributes to the discourse is how COVID-19 has continuously, over three years, affected the manner in which teachers manage their emotions in times of stress within their profession; in other words, this study explores the relationships between the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers' emotional labor strategies, and their attitudes toward and perceptions of their professional satisfaction and risk of burnout.

While teacher shortages negatively affected student outcomes (Berry & Shields, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2016; Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016), this study purposefully focused on teachers' experiences, stopping short of addressing the impacts of teacher emotional labor on students' academic and social emotional learning. Improvements on teacher mental health and other reform efforts to increase teacher retention would undoubtedly have positive effects on students' academic outcomes and schooling experiences, but the importance and novelty of this study was the concern for teachers' mental health and occupational satisfaction in and of itself, as opposed to in conversation with student outcomes. With teachers feeling taken advantage of while

practicing their craft during the COVID-19 pandemic (Steiner & Woo, 2021), it is my hope—in having conducted this study focused on and prioritizing teacher voice—that the findings help foster much-needed appreciation of and attention on teachers as individuals in need of specialized care, rather than as a means to a student-centered end.

Summary

The proceeding chapter provided a review of the literature surrounding stressors facing teachers, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. A discussion of stress, trauma, and their physical and mental effects contextualized the current state of the teaching profession and its impact on teachers' capacity for emotional labor. Current practices addressing emotional labor in teaching and in similar, helping professions are presented. Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive explanation of the methodology used, detailing the interview questions developed and the coding method enacted. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, and the dissertation concludes with a final, fifth chapter of analysis, implications, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study sought to investigate the effect that teaching during a pandemic has had on teachers' professional stress and feelings of burnout by analyzing teachers' emotional labor strategies during the pandemic. As such, this literature review begins by delineating the topic of teacher stressors, particularly those identified frequently by educators as reasons for prematurely exiting the profession. Then, the focus of the review narrows to burnout and a comprehensive review of emotional labor, contextualizing the study to come by chronicling investigations into the emotional labor strategies employed by individuals in the teaching profession, as well as by those in similar "helping" professions, such as hospitality and law enforcement. This literature review precedes a detailed chapter on the study's methodology and serves to contextualize the frameworks involved in the study's design.

Teacher Stressors

The following section outlines the stressors that challenge teachers' abilities to meet these expectations. These stressors can often be identified as additional responsibilities or expectations outside of the ones commonly accepted as outlined in the FFT, or as elements of the profession that directly inhibit a teacher's ability to meet these expectations with proficiency or distinction. In other words, the stressors outlined in this section tend to prevent teachers from being as effective as they can be. General stressors are discussed first, followed by stressors that arose upon the arrival of the pandemic in March 2020.

Professional Stressors for Teachers

Teachers report myriad stressors that challenge their commitment to their chosen profession. Teaching has been considered a stressful career in need of greater compensation and more robust support for over a century (Boyden et al., 1901; Teacher shortage in number and quality, 1918), and while monetary compensation—which is addressed later in this section—is largely commensurate neither with teachers' levels of education nor their level of pedagogical expertise, the stressors teachers often identify are more closely aligned with professional dissatisfaction. A landmark 1997 study by Perie, Baker, and American Institutes for Research identified three working conditions that related to teachers' professional satisfaction: administrative support and leadership, student behavior, and school atmosphere. Compensation was not as strongly related to workplace satisfaction as were these other three factors (Perie et al., 1997), and these results have been replicated in later studies (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010; Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb et al., 2005).

More recently, the education, publishing, and media company, Scholastic Inc.—in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—reported similar results, namely teacher dissatisfaction with working conditions, in a 2013 investigation into challenges facing America's elementary and secondary school educators. The three professional obstacles most commonly cited by teachers themselves were (beginning with most frequently identified): constantly changing job demands; lack of collaboration time with colleagues; and bloated class sizes. Limited earning potential came in at fourth place in order of prevalence of responses. For high school teachers, the top occupational stressor was lack of supportive leadership (Scholastic Inc. & Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2013). For the purposes of this review, the stressors

have been separated into six categories: administrative support, accountability measures, student behavior, workload, public level of respect, and early career disconnection. These categories, with the exception of public perception of the profession, most closely align with the responsibilities outlined as elements in the FFT domains of Planning & Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.

Administrative Support

Adequate administrative support has been found to be the most consistent indicator of teacher job satisfaction (Blase et al., 2008; Tickle et al. 2011; Weiss, 1999). Support by school administration takes many forms, in manners that affect teachers' professional environment directly and indirectly. Indirectly, school administrators can support teachers by developing a collaborative school culture and shared school vision amongst all stakeholders (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Directly, school administrators can support teachers by providing professional learning and development opportunities, demonstrating instructional leadership, protecting planning and collaboration time, and encouraging and fostering collegial relationships (Sutcher et al., 2016).

One of the most commonly identified factors of administrative support that teachers find inadequate is teacher self-efficacy—meaning, teachers' perceived role in decision making at the school-wide level (Darling-Hammond, 2003). The 2014 Gallup Report on the state of America's schools listed teachers last in a list of 12 occupations for likelihood to say their opinions seem to count at work, citing the 70% of teachers polled who reported not being engaged in their jobs as a possible result of this perception of low self-efficacy (Gallup, 2014). Indeed, the collaborative school environment and shared vision that teachers look for in an administration has as much to

do with teacher-administration collaboration as it does with teacher-teacher collaboration (Boyd et al., 2009).

Teacher job satisfaction is the most consistent indicator of teacher attrition, and administrative support has been identified as the most significant predictor of teachers' job satisfaction. Teachers who report feeling unsupported were twice as likely to leave the profession as those who did feel supported (Sutcher et al., 2016), a finding reinforced by additional studies that identified a strong relationship between administrative support and teachers' intent to remain in the profession (Ladd, 2009; Loeb et al., 2005; Luekens, 2004; Weiss, 1999).

Accountability Measures

Accountability measures—usually related to student standardized test scores—are a factor in teacher stress. Accountability measures have evolved and increased in frequency and stake since the late 1990s, only hemorrhaging further with the 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) and its 2016 successor, *Race to the Top* (2016). Pressure at having to meet and exceed constantly changing and increasing expectations both for professional practice and student achievement has been a stressor for teachers for over twenty years (Dee et al., 2010; Desimone, 2013; Porter et al., 2015; Williams, 2008).

Stress related to standardized testing is especially poignant for teachers working with students who tend to perform poorly on standardized tests, or who are not on track to meet grade-level expectations for various reasons. Teachers at low-performing schools (based on data from standardized assessments) tend to experience low morale and lack of support from their administration, with emphasis on students' low performances and lack of recognition for teachers' hard work (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). In a study of "invested leavers," or veteran

teachers who have chosen to exit the profession, from three different regions of the United States identified stress over accountability measures as major factors towards their decisions to leave. They described not only immense pressure to have all students pass their respective states' standardized assessments, but also decreased autonomy over their lessons, as their districts pushed them to prioritize testing drills over their normally scheduled curricula (Glazer, 2017). Teachers have also identified feelings of low self-worth and professional efficacy as students have failed to meet goals set by the standardized test and accompanying accountability measures (Maguire & Towers, 2017).

Much of the stress that teachers experience due to state or federally-sanctioned accountability measures is caused by a feeling of powerlessness—students take the standardized tests, and the extent to which teachers can impact students' scores is limited. However, teacher evaluation is another mode of accountability that causes stress in the profession. Teachers have reported unhealthy competition, perceptions of administrator inconsistency, and increased stress as effects of teacher evaluation systems (Anderson et al., 2019).

Student Behavior

Teachers spend the majority of their days with children and adolescents, and therefore must manage student behavior with as much skill as they manage their academic instruction. As a stressor, student behavior is not limited to overtly negative incidents of disrespect. A 2007 study documented 35 distinct student behaviors—ranging from violent outbursts to falling asleep during class—that were found to cause stress in their teachers, with lack of effort being the student behavior most strongly associated with teacher stress (Geving, 2007).

Student behavior as a factor in teacher attrition is not always solely based on student-specific behavior; schools' disciplinary policies often dictate how teachers can and should respond to student behavior issues, and ineffective school disciplinary policies, as perceived by teachers, are a strong predictor of attrition (Torres, 2016). Furthermore, student behavior, while consistently identified as a stressor in the teaching profession, is not always seen as an indicator of teacher attrition; rather, managing student behavior and attitude is often an expected part of the professional requirements while administrative policies and lack of support for teachers managing classroom behavior is an unforeseen burden (Moriarty et al., 2001). Student discipline, rather than management of student behavior, is found to be a strong indicator of teacher attrition (Rieg et al., 2007), and the distinction between teacher and administrative handling of negative student behavior is worthy of note.

Workload

The Danielson Group's (2019) Framework for Teaching (FFT) outlined the various responsibilities, in terms of instruction, communication, and collaboration that teachers must fulfill in their professions; however, concerns about workload tend to focus on the amount of students and time devoted to instruction, grading, and planning, teachers are expected to contribute (The Danielson Group, 2019). Specifically, teachers who expressed concern or distress over workload cited high student-to-teacher ratios, paperwork for Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), grading, lesson planning, and time both within and outside of work hours as factors towards feelings of being overwhelmed with professional requirements (Newberry & Allsop, 2017).

It is not only the sheer amount of work that contributes to teachers' feelings of being overworked and overwhelmed; research suggested that it is also the nature of the work and the context of the work that has changed (Apple, 1986). Even before the sweeping policy reforms of 2001, education scholar Michael Apple (1986) attempted to provide a theoretical explanation for teachers' changing workloads and working conditions. His resulting "intensification thesis" credited policy makers and societal expectations for new pressures on teachers and schools. As schools faced pressure to become more efficient and effective, teachers became less involved in curriculum development and almost exclusively involved in curriculum execution and classroom management (Apple, 1986; Apple & Jungck, 1990). Even though workload stress is consistently identified by teachers as a professional stressor, there are mixed reports of the stressor's role in professional dissatisfaction, and some studies report that the former is not a significant predictor of the latter (Sass et al., 2011).

Public Level of Respect

Low levels of societal respect for teachers are another professional stressor that teachers experience. In the 2012-2013 Schools and Staffing Survey, former public school teachers who left the profession were asked to evaluate several measures of professional satisfaction and indicate if, in their current position, they were more, less, or as satisfied as they had been when they were teaching. Out of 20 metrics, former teachers only identified one measure—benefits—which was better when they were teachers than they are experiencing in their current position. Over 50% reported that their level of professional prestige is higher in their current position than it was in teaching (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013).

Considering that teaching has been a woman-dominated profession since the mid-1800s, it is crucial to address the role of gender in the profession and in its public reputation. Teaching in the United States enjoyed a high social status when formal education was an exclusive privilege for the wealthy. As long as private tutors were instructing their pupils in French language and culture, as well as other high-brow skills necessary for survival in the upper classes, they were likely to be men, and more than likely to be held in high public esteem (Hoffman, 2003). Once public education emerged as a method for American society to procure disciplined, well-behaved industrial workers, teaching as a career lost its prestige. Women could be hired for lower wages, and their administrators—almost always men—perceived that they would be easier to control than would be their male counterparts. In addition, women were considered more adept at character education and the "civilizing" of young people with no prior formal education before they sought employment in the swelling industrial labor market (Hoffman, 2003).

Early Career Disconnection

Early career disconnection is a prominent stressor that novice teachers cite in their premature exit from the classroom. The lowest levels of teacher professional engagement occur within the first 3-5 years of practice, with engagement rising again after five years of experience (Gallup, 2014). Additional studies consistently support this finding on early career engagement (Gallant & Riley, 2014; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and use this data to help explain the 40%-50% of K-12 educators who leave the teaching profession within their first five years of practice (Gallant & Riley, 2014). This lack of engagement early in teachers' careers often follows from a sense of disillusionment in the profession: There is a perceived gap in new teachers' expectations

for the profession and their reality upon entering the profession (Adoniou, 2016; Brown, 2005; Gallant & Riley, 2014). New teachers tend to create a vision for what their professional goals will be, and if they are not able to meet that vision due to factors outside their immediate control, they lose faith in themselves and motivation to continue within the profession (Hong, 2010; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2009; Torres, 2012).

Additional factors that affect new or early career teacher disillusionment are out-of-field teaching and lack of colleague support. In preservice training and licensure programs, novice teachers are beholden to licensing requirements they must fulfill before they are hired; these requirements tend to be for a specific subject or age level. However, once a district hires a teacher, there is minimal regulation as to how the district utilizes this employee, and many teachers find themselves teaching in subject areas or grade levels in which they are not licensed nor trained (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). New teachers often receive the most difficult assignments and workloads, with the least amount of training or preparation (Ingersoll, 2012). Once new teachers graduate from their preservice programs, they often miss the colleague support of their fellow new teachers, which can lead to feelings of stymied professional growth and subsequent disillusionment (Brown, 2005; Gallant & Riley, 2014). Without a robust induction experience with input and opportunities to communicate and collaborate with other novice teachers, they often feel ineffective and isolated and may learn too late that they are not alone, and would fare better with more support (Ingersoll, 2012).

Compounded Responsibilities During COVID-19

Teacher stressors during the COVID-19 pandemic are still being reported and are currently accumulating as the pandemic continues to affect school operations as of the writing of

this study. Returning to the Framework for Teaching (FFT), The Danielson Group (2020) recognized and responded to the needs of teachers during remote learning with the Framework for [Remote] Teaching (FFRT[4]). The FFRT prioritized explicitly student wellbeing, equity, and racial justice; implicitly, it also prioritizes teacher wellbeing by eliminating the scoring rubrics for each domain, explaining, "Teachers need support, not scores" (The Danielson Group, 2019). The FFRT condensed the number of components from 22 to 8, prioritizing those that are most relevant to the move to virtual learning, and categorizes them into three new domains: Knowing and Valuing Your Students; Building Responsive Learning Environments; and Engaging Students in Learning.

Most—with the exclusion of the standardized testing and accountability measures pressure—stressors previously identified in this review persisted, albeit to different extents and under different circumstances, during the pandemic. Various high-stakes testing assessments, both at the state and national levels, were canceled, postponed, or otherwise altered during the 2020-2021 academic year in response to widespread outcry at the rampant technological inequities that came to light during the pandemic. Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education under President Donald Trump, granted individual states the option to skip high-stakes testing in 2020, but President Biden came under fire early in his presidency in 2021 when he required that states administer the tests, but with flexibility on how and when to administer the tests, the length and mode of testing, and how to use the scores (Strauss, 2021). In stride with the efforts by The Danielson Group (2019) to modify components in the FFRT, this section identifies four new

[4] I use this acronym to distinguish between the traditional and remote versions of the FFT. The acronym is of my creation and is not utilized by The Danielson Group in any of their resources.

stressors not previously mentioned—shift to mental health and wellness; distance learning; return to in-person instruction; and domestic responsibilities—and explain how each stressor may inflame, aggravate, or otherwise affect the five stressors previously outlined: administrative support; accountability measures; student behavior; workload; public level of respect; and early career disconnection.

Distance Learning

The shift that most teachers across the United States made from in-person to virtual, distance learning introduced novel stressors to the profession. Teachers, like millions of other professionals globally, had to adjust their craft during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shutdowns and stay at home orders. Immediately for some and after a two-week school building closure for others—meaning, buildings closed and classes suspended—teachers pivoted their lessons to an online model and continued to teach their students from a distance through asynchronous—pre-recorded videos and online assignments—and/or synchronous—live sessions via Zoom (www.zoom.us) or a similar video conferencing platform. This two-week interim was not common to every school in the United States, but was common for teachers in California and Massachusetts, where it is hypothesized that the majority of study participants taught during the pandemic. While most public school students across the country experienced distance learning for the majority, if not all, of the remainder of that spring semester, it is important to note that some schools remained open or offered hybrid options at different times throughout the semester. Additionally, formal and informal "learning pods" have been documented as operating nationwide during the pandemic. Learning pods refer to small, private learning communities offered or created at various costs to address student needs not met during "traditional" distance

learning (Fensterwald, 2021). These various educational phenomena make it, therefore, difficult to capture the experiences of teachers nationwide. Thus, this section of the review focuses on the experiences of the majority of teachers, who taught online for at least one semester, even if they also experienced a temporary or permanent shift to a hybrid or in-person model.

Monitoring students online presented an entirely new facet to teachers' previously touted ability to multitask in their brick-and-mortar classrooms. Teachers in virtual classrooms found themselves presenting online content, checking for understanding both verbally and in the chat, sometimes monitoring students' screens in real time, and often monitoring correspondence within the chat. Two additional factors to manage in the virtual classroom, particularly on video conferencing platforms, were the "Zoom bombing" and "Zoom fatigue." An individual who fraudulently gained entry to a Zoom meeting and disrupted the attendees with auditory, visual, or written content that is often sexually or otherwise explicit is referred to as "Zoom bombing" and occurred when anonymous individuals used student emails or accounts to access their Zoom classroom. "Zoom fatigue" refers to exhaustion from consistent and frequent usage of computer mediated video conferencing platforms, such as, but not limited to, Zoom (Nadler, 2020).

Teacher-Student Relationships

During the pandemic, challenges to their relationships with their students was a stressor, especially for those teachers who began the 2021-2022 academic year in distance learning and taught an entire academic year without seeing their students in person. Teaching is largely interactive between teachers and students (Jones, 2017). Learning—and then learning to manage—the factors unique to the online classroom left little time for teachers to build meaningful relationships with students, especially those they only knew from behind a screen.

During virtual instruction, face-to-face interactions between teachers and their students decreased. Shortened classes, asynchronous lessons, and the finality of the "log on" and "log off" features for synchronous classes left aspects of relationship building to be desired, such as the informal time before and after in-person class periods when students often ask for help, exchange plans for the upcoming weekend, and simply get to know their teachers on a more personal level. Truancy also affected teacher-student relationships, as an estimated three million students nationwide communicated minimally, if at all, with school personnel for the entirety of distance learning (Hodges, 2020).

Domestic Responsibilities

Research indicates that caretaking responsibilities, particularly for female, mid-career teachers, presented a large obstacle to their professional abilities during the pandemic. When the shift to remote schooling happened suddenly in March 2020, teachers and other nonessential workers found themselves needing to juggle domestic and professional responsibilities simultaneously. Mid-career teachers, those most likely to have school-aged children at home, are almost certainly to experience difficulty in working from home, with 51% of mid-career teachers expressing difficulty in balancing caretaking and teaching responsibilities, compared only to 39% of early career teachers and 30% of veteran teachers (Kraft et al., 2021). Young, female teachers were twice as likely as their male counterparts to cite childcare considerations as a pandemic-related reason for exiting the teaching profession prematurely (Diliberti et al., 2021).

Public Perception of Teaching Profession

Public perception of the teaching profession has already been identified in this review as a teacher stressor, but that preexisting stress compounded with increased public scrutiny during

the pandemic. Only two years before the pandemic started, the United States ranked 16th out of 35 countries for public perception of the status of the teaching profession worldwide (Varkey Foundation, 2018). And it was not long after the immediate shutdown of in-person schooling and into the phenomenon of widespread virtual instruction that public opinion of teachers took a sharp downturn. Public sentiment towards teachers soured in the context of the school reopening debate. After one full semester of virtual learning—fall of the 2020-2021 academic year—some parents yearned for the return to in-person instruction while some remained wary of the potential for viral spread amongst school children.

Teachers' unions in major urban districts, such as Los Angeles and Boston, tended to err on the side of caution and discouraged schools' reopening until districts could guarantee certain health and safety guidelines (Sacks, 2021), while parents used social media to argue that teachers were scheming for paid time off and were resisting the return to in-person schooling out of sheer laziness (Smith, 2021). Parents cited schools—particularly private, independent schools—that successfully reopened in winter 2020 as evidence that teachers, and teachers' unions especially, represented everything wrong with American public schools (Will, 2021). But parents were not the only category of non-educators admonishing teachers. Kristin McConnell (2020), a nurse in New York City, wrote an Op-Ed for *The Atlantic* in which she argued that teachers, like nurses, are "essential workers," and should, therefore, be working to perform—in person—their functions in service to our society (McConnell, 2020).

Emotional Labor

Emotional labor is a transactional factor in occupational stress, where an individual displays a certain emotional expression that is deemed appropriate for the given professional

setting, despite the stressors the individual is facing. Research on the service sector in the post-industrial market began to reveal the often-overlooked value of face-to-face interactions between employees and customers (Bell, 1973). With employee-customer relationships valued as a commodity, the employee gains employment and compensation—in other words, a wage—in return for that appropriate emotional expression (Hochschild & Drescher, 1983).

The expectations an employer establishes for their employees' affect are called "display rules" (Ekman & Friesen, 1971) and serve to help the employer meet its own organizational goals (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild & Drescher, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996) by requiring that employees express either positive emotions through integrative displays or negative emotions through differentiating displays, and/or suppress naturally-felt emotions through masking displays (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003; Wharton, 1993). Employees tend to perceive these display rules to be a required aspect of their job, whether the display rules are communicated by the employer explicitly or implicitly (Diefendorff et al., 2005). Emotive dissonance and value dissonance occur if the employee's personal emotions or values contradict those of the emotions they are expected to display or suppress (Best et al., 1999) and can result in feelings of inauthenticity (Hochschild & Drescher, 1983).

The two main emotional labor strategies Hochschild and Drescher (1983) introduced operate under the assumption that customer-interfacing employees engage in acting, to some extent, on a daily basis. That acting can be surface-level or deep-level. Surface acting occurs when the employee uses their body language to convey an emotion they do not feel; deep acting, on the other hand, occurs when the employee induces a genuine, natural feeling to respond to a situation that requires emotional response (Hochschild & Drescher, 1983). Whether the

employee utilizes surface or deep acting, there is a conscious choice to express what is deemed an appropriate emotion for a given situation. What is deemed appropriate is determined by the employer, the profession, or both.

In order for an individual to use emotional labor in accordance with its institutional or organizational display rules, they must possess emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence consists of four abilities: first, the ability to perceive and express emotions accurately; second, the ability to access and/or generate the appropriate feeling to facilitate the expression of certain thoughts; third, the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and fourth, the ability to manage and regulate emotions for personal and intellectual growth (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence decreases job-related stress, burnout, and general adverse health symptoms (Hur et al., 2021; Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002).

Though these two terms—emotional intelligence and emotional labor—are thus related, but they are not synonymous: Emotional labor is a practice of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has consistently positive effects on job performance and efficacy, while emotional labor contributes to aspects of burnout, which will be discussed in more detail in the review of literature on emotional labor. The following section provides an overview of emotional labor studies in the helping professions excluding teachers, and then specifically in literature concerning education.

Emotional Labor in Helping Professions

Research into emotional labor—as it manifests in professions that involve constant, interpersonal interactions—investigates the value of emotional labor in maintaining positive interactions, as well as the relationships between emotional labor and job satisfaction. The first

study in emotional labor concerned flight attendants (Hochschild & Drescher, 1983), but that initial work has inspired research on other primarily customer-facing professions. Interest in and focus on emotional labor scholarship is relatively new because the perception that emotional labor is a naturally feminine activity has resulted in its being devalued as a factor in scholarship on job satisfaction and burnout (Glomb et al., 2004; Gray, 2009; Oakley, 1974; Persaud, 2004; Totterdell & Holman, 2003).

Studies on emotional labor in the helping professions differentiated between surface acting and deep acting as they each relate to the components of burnout that individuals in these professions experience. The relationships are not uniform across all professions: Surface acting was found to positively influence emotional exhaustion in bank tellers, hospitality workers, and retail workers (Chau et al., 2009; Hur et al., 2021; Lv et al., 2012) and negatively decrease emotional exhaustion in police officers (Schaible & Gecas, 2010). Deep acting was found to positively influence depersonalization in police officers (Schaible & Gecas, 2010), and promote quality interpersonal relationships and increase therapeutic value in nurses (Gray, 2009).

The discrepancy in effects of emotional labor on components of burnout can be explained by examining feelings of authenticity in each profession. For example, while police officers are often expected to adhere to conflicting expectations (Guy et al., 2008; Schaible & Gecas, 2010), long-standing and gendered societal expectations for nurses—while problematic—ensure clearly defined technical and emotional expectations that do not often result in feelings of value dissonance (Gray, 2009; Smith, 1992). Thus, it is not only the interpersonal nature of these professions that influence the impact of emotional labor on job satisfaction and burnout; it is also

the implicit expectations communicated for each profession and the common values held between a profession and its employees.

Emotional Labor in Teachers

Teaching involves heavy emotional labor. Teachers use emotions not only in their pedagogical practices, but also as responses to the conditions of the profession, particularly as defense of their own practices and professional identities in the classroom (Hargreaves, 1998; Keck, 2019; Nias, 1996). The profession requires teachers to modify and control their emotions in order to optimize student behavioral and academic outcomes (Garner et al., 2013), but schools do not explicitly communicate the display rules they hold for teachers' emotional management (Brown et al., 2014). Similar to the discussion on emotional labor in other helping professions, emotional labor is often downplayed and undervalued in the literature on teacher job satisfaction and burnout (Bellas, 1999).

The following section reviews both the positive and negative functions of emotional labor, beginning with the positive effects of emotional labor on teachers' self-identity and professional satisfaction. It concludes with a discussion of the negative effects of emotional labor, namely burnout and professional dissatisfaction.

Teacher Self-Identity and Classroom Experience

Emotional labor is directly tied to teachers' sense of self-identity in the classroom and in the profession. Despite the fact that schools do not explicitly convey the expectations for emotional management for teachers, all teachers engage in emotional labor on a regular basis (Brown et al., 2014; Kerr & Brown, 2016). Emotional rules in teaching differ from the emotional expectations in other professions in that there is a focus on self-accusation, not on accusation of

the organization or other external forces (Winograd, 2003). This internal focus that dictates expression and management of emotion stems from the importance of caring for others in the profession. Caring for students is a significant aspect of teacher self-image (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Nias, 1996)—in other words, how teachers view themselves professionally—and teachers are willing to engage in emotional labor because the emotional rewards of caring for students are gratifying (Zembylas, 2004). The sense of responsibility teachers have is a critical factor in their professional identities, and teachers for whom love and care are a central tenet of their pedagogy are more successful in suppressing their own negative emotions (Sandilos et al., 2017).

Emotional labor also affects teachers in their practices, particularly in their interactions with students. Emotional labor predicts organizational commitment and workplace engagement in teachers (Sezen-Gultekin et al., 2021). Deep acting, specifically, positively affects teachers' work satisfaction and professional performance (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011), while surface acting has demonstrated a positive contribution to class culture and affect, as well as increases in intrinsic motivation in both students and teachers (Burić, 2019). Teachers' emotional labor strategies adapt to various levels of relationships with students: closer student-teacher relationships resulted in teachers using genuine emotional expressions; antagonistic and dependent student-teacher relationships resulted in less genuine emotional expression and more surface acting (de Ruiter et al., 2021).

Professional Satisfaction and Burnout

Emotional labor is a survival mechanism for the daily stress teachers identify in their practices (Gallup, 2014; Kerr & Brown, 2016). The components of emotional labor—naturally

felt emotions, deep acting, and surface acting—affect teacher burnout to varying extents. Surface acting has consistent association with increased burnout and decreased job satisfaction, and deep acting tends to be associated with increased job satisfaction (Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Yin et al., 2019; Zhang & Zhu, 2008); however, studies on deep acting show mixed results on the strategy's effect on teacher burnout and overall emotional wellness (Karim & Weisz, 2011; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Näring et al., 2006; Näring et al., 2012; Noor & Zainuddin, 2011).

Caring for and about students is a central tenet to the teaching profession (Noddings, 2005), but the emotional labor required to appropriately express care in a variety of situations and contexts can lead to burnout (Brennan, 2006; Sumsion, 2000). Though surface acting has positive effects on classroom culture and student academic outcomes, teachers have also identified the strategy as a coping mechanism for conflicts in their sense of professional identity. For teachers who feel inadequate at achieving what they deem to be the caring, loving teacher persona, surface acting is a facade.

Burnout

Consistent maintenance of this cover can eventually lead to feelings of burnout (Brown et al., 2014). Feelings of shame and incompetence reinforce the need for emotional management expectations to be explicit and standardized (Hartley, 2004). Burnout is not specific to those who work with individuals experiencing or having experienced trauma (Turgoose et al., 2017). Burnout occurs when occupational stress has intensity, duration, and persistence. Stress experienced over time results in decreased personal motivation, leading to negative self-esteem and attitude, decreased efficiency, and low feelings of self-efficacy (Baker, 2012). Burnout specifically manifests itself in three key components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization,

and reduced perception of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The literature review presented in the previous chapter contextualizes emotional labor strategies within the teaching profession, particularly as the demands and challenges of teaching have evolved and intensified throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers identify various obstacles to success in the profession, and attrition rates reveal the costs of leaving those obstacles unaddressed. In gathering and synthesizing current research on emotional labor in teachers, an opportunity emerged to contribute to the scholarship: Even studies on emotional labor written after or during the COVID-19 pandemic mentioned the pandemic only as a limitation to the respective inquiry's methodology, rather than as its own factor affecting an individual's experience with emotional labor. This study considered the pandemic as a distinct factor in teachers' perceptions of their emotional labor and institutions' display rules.

This study expanded on previous research by investigating specifically how teachers used emotional labor strategies during the pandemic in response to new and evolving professional expectations. Studies on teachers' emotional labor strategies in the United States focused on teachers' perceptions of their professional identity and of their efficacy in living up to their ideal of a teacher (Brown et al., 2014; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Kerr & Brown, 2016; Schueths et al., 2013; Zembylas, 2003, 2004). This study aimed to contribute to this limited collection of inquiries into emotional labor in U.S. teachers by analyzing how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected teachers' ability to manage their emotions in what is now considered the most stressful time to be an educator in U.S. history.

This chapter reiterates the research questions introduced in Chapter 1 and provides a rationale for the qualitative approach conducted. I describe in detail the method, participants, and setting, as well as the interview instrument used in data collection. After outlining the analysis plan for data collected via this instrument, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's validity, limitations, and delimitations.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of determining which, if any, emotional labor strategies that teachers use during the pandemic, and with what level of success, the following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. What stressors—new or exacerbated—do teachers perceive in their profession during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' emotional labor strategies?
3. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' job satisfaction and feelings of burnout?

Teacher attrition has been a concern in both theoretical and practical circles for over a century (Teacher shortage in number and quality, 1918). Reasons teachers provided for exiting the profession early range from compensation to administrative support to student behavior (Diliberti et al., 2021; Steiner & Woo, 2021; Sutcher et al., 2016). Though both network news and social media have shared widespread reports of teachers' negative experiences during the pandemic (Cantu, 2022; Comme, 2022; Graham, 2022; Greene, 2021; Rodriguez-Delgado et al., 2021; Streeter, 2021; Zedeck, 2021), this study aimed to contribute to what is sure in the next

few years to be a vast collection of scholarly work on short- and long-term effects of the pandemic on the teaching profession.

Rationale for Qualitative, Phenomenological Approach

The qualitative approach was the best way to answer the research questions posed above because it is the most effective way to solicit and record teachers' perceptions of their experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The nuance of each teacher's experience was going to vary drastically by state, district, school site, prior teaching experience, personal experience with the pandemic, and a host of other factors. For example, a teacher who experienced hybrid instruction in a rural area with an immune-compromised child at home might share a wholly different perspective than would a teacher who experienced hybrid instruction in a major city while physically isolated from friends and family across state lines. Even the concept of hybrid instruction has myriad operational definitions depending on the specific needs of a given school and its students.

Additionally, a phenomenological investigation was most appropriate to determine how teachers were experiencing the pandemic in their professional contexts because the phenomenological approach focuses on the lived experiences of the subjects and the meaning these experiences has to the subjects (Cohen & Omery, 1994). Therefore, all three research questions relied on interpretive phenomenology. The first research question required the study's subjects to consult The Danielson Framework for Teaching (The Danielson Group, 2019) to contextualize changes in their professional responsibilities experienced during the pandemic. In the course of addressing the second research question, I used Çukur's (2009) Teacher Emotional Labor Scale to develop a series of structured interview questions which asked participants to

describe their use of emotional labor strategies while at work during the course of the pandemic. Although the participants were not aware of Çukur's influence on the interview protocol, my use of this framework to craft certain questions contributed to the overall interpretive approach. And finally, the third research question required careful consideration of Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers to analyze participant descriptions of their use of emotional labor strategies and the effect of these strategies on their feelings of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

My intent as a qualitative researcher was not necessarily to generalize or extrapolate based on the interviews of 16 teachers; rather, it was to add to a growing knowledge base of why teaching is difficult—and particularly so—during the pandemic. Hearing teachers' perceptions of their pandemic-era experiences and their reflections on how they reacted and responded emotionally to the changing needs of their students and their communities was far more valuable than interpreting a bar graph of what percentage of teachers experienced certain phenomena if the intent is to value and describe honestly teachers' testimonies (Noddings, 1996).

Method

To answer the above research questions, I conducted a qualitative study of U.S. high school teachers using semi-structured interviews as the primary method. The following sections provide details about the participants, setting, data collection, and analysis plan.

Participants

The study held three requirements for its participants.

Participants must have taught high school primarily. The study sought to analyze teachers' perceptions of and responses to their interactions with students, and teachers'

interactions with older, high school students differs generally in depth and topic from their interactions with younger, middle school students. High school and middle school teachers also differ in some of their responsibilities, with high school teachers preparing students for their imminent entry into higher education or the workforce.

Participants must have been primarily student-facing, teaching, and/or facilitating content in a classroom. The study was open to general education teachers, Special Education teachers, and English Language Development teachers, as long as the majority of their contracted time was spent delivering or facilitating content to and with high school students in the classroom setting, whether that be through smaller "pull-out" courses or integrated "push-in" services, in which they provided instruction within a content-area class period. Though Special Education and English Language Development teachers have some different responsibilities than do their content-area colleagues—for example, Special Education teachers may focus on creating and implementing accommodations for existing curricula rather than creating said curricula itself—the justification for their inclusion was based on the nature of their work with students. Unlike counselors, social workers, and administrators, who may meet with students all day in one-on-one or small group settings for specific social-emotional needs, Special Education and English Language Development teachers are generally student-facing, in the classroom setting, teaching and facilitating academic content. Thus, the nature of their interactions with students is comparable to that of the interactions between content-area teachers and students and indicates that their inclusion in this study was appropriate.

Participants must have had a minimum of three years of teaching experience by summer 2022, consecutively in the same school. Each participant must have had experienced pre-

COVID, in-person instruction, some variation of virtual and/or hybrid instruction during the pandemic, and the return to in-person instruction. Participants must have had experienced all three of these distinct phases at the same school site in order to control for professional responsibilities to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, adjusting to a new school environment, a new category of school type, or a new curriculum might prove an obstacle for teachers in any historic time period. The study focused intentionally on changes to professional expectations and their corresponding strains on emotional labor strategies specifically caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

Besides these three parameters, there were no limitations for participants. Demographics on gender and ethnicity were collected and are reported in Chapter 4 to frame relevant suggestions for future research made in Chapter 5. Demographic data was not collected until participants responded to the recruitment email and agreed to participate in the study.

Setting

The setting of this study was of utmost importance since it determined the study's participants. I used a hybrid of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling. Taking advantage of my social and professional networks, having studied and taught on both U.S. coasts, I wrote a recruitment email that I sent to my contacts who were current or former teachers or administrators as of June 2022. In the recruitment inquiry, which I delivered via the convenience of email and social media (Etikan, 2016; Leighton et al., 2021), I outlined the research topic, the voluntary nature of any participation, the minimum number of subjects to be selected for interviews, and my criteria for selecting participants as described in the previous section. I informed potential participants of the date by which they must indicate their

affirmative interest via Google Form (https://docs.google.com/forms/), and the date by which I would contact them (see Appendix G) if they were to be selected for an interview: within two weeks of the Google Form response deadline. A copy of the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix H) was included in this initial email for their reference. I instructed these contacts to pass the recruitment inquiry along to their own contacts who met the qualifications to the best of their knowledge.

Once I procured a pool of interested potential participants, I selected participants from a variety of content areas, including Resource Specialists and English Language Development Teachers, who represent a wide variety of years of experience, attempting also to select teaching staff who represent the diversity of race, ethnicity, and gender of teachers across the United States.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study took the form of a semi-structured interview (see Appendix D for fixed questions and sample adaptable questions).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Once I reviewed the questionnaire data to determine eligibility for the study, I scheduled each eligible participant for a one-hour interview. Each participant was given the opportunity to create a pseudonym which I used in the description of participants included in Chapter 4. With location and COVID-19-related safety concerns in mind, I gave both local and non-local participants the option to meet in-person or on Zoom. All participants decided to participate using the Zoom platform.

For video-conferencing interview sessions conducted on Zoom, I asked for each participant's permission to record the session. Once I secured permission to record audio and video and after the interview has concluded, I used Zoom's built-in dictation software to download a transcript of the dialogue. I reviewed the transcript along with the audio recording to check for accuracy, as the dictation software does not always achieve perfect reflections of the content recorded. Though I corrected the software's spelling errors, I did not correct grammar from the dialogue of any party unless a component was otherwise incomprehensible. In this uncommon case, I conferred with the subject in question during member checking before correcting any grammatical errors.

The interview questions were separated into three topics:

1. The subject's perceptions of changes in professional responsibilities and duties over the course of the pandemic
2. The subject's perceptions of their emotional labor strategies and the outcomes of said strategies
3. The subject's attitudes towards their future career plans in education.

I also compiled a list of follow-up or probing questions that were used in some interviews, but not others, depending on the thoroughness of each subject's responses. All interviews closed with a uniform question: *What do you want non-teachers to know or understand more comprehensively about what it has been like to teach during the COVID-19 pandemic?* Throughout the interview, the emphasis was purposefully on teachers' perceptions, experiences, and narratives with the intent of highlighting and uplifting teacher voice.

Analysis

I utilized a strictly qualitative approach to examine teachers' experiences and highlight teachers' narrative autonomy in recalling their own experiences. I collected the qualitative data for this study through semi-structured interviews via the Zoom online platform to reduce the logistical burden on teachers practicing across the United States while still maintaining personal contact through the face-to-face video chat feature. Each research question addressed in the study required a distinct analytical strategy.

I used descriptive analysis for the data gathered in the initial questionnaire to assess frequency in each category (Fallon, 2016). The data's primary purpose was to inform any implications for future research based on trends I observed within or between certain subgroups of participants.

To address the first research question regarding pandemic-era occupational stressors, I used descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2014) to summarize each participant's description of their experiences. I then categorized the coded data according to the preexisting headings found in Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers. I chose to use the headings from the Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers to organize participant responses because the framework is structured into three sections: antecedents, emotional labor strategies, and consequences. Upon preliminary examination of participants' testimonies, there emerged a pattern of pandemic-related stressors and professional expectations that affected participants' usage of emotional labor strategies and their subsequent job satisfaction. The Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers provided the lens through which to outline comprehensively the effects of the pandemic on the teaching profession.

To address the second research question concerning participants' emotional labor strategies, I used *in vivo* coding (Strauss, 1987) to develop codes organically (Leavy, 2017). After deriving codes inductively from participants' responses, I used theming to define consistencies amongst teachers' experiences with managing their emotions when encountering pandemic-related stressors.

To address the third research question with respect to participants' perceptions of job satisfaction and burnout, I once again referred to Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers to establish the initial categorization of participant responses. I then used values coding (Saldaña, 2014) to identify commonalities in participants' experiences and sort the data according to those commonalities. My priority was to use my subjects' language as much as possible, especially when it came to their descriptions of their own emotions. Additionally, I looked for themes in how participants described any inter or intrapersonal conflicts or obstacles they faced while teaching during the pandemic. I began my analysis by extracting language each participant used to describe their emotional labor and responses to stressors. Once I gathered this verbatim language from each interview, I summarized the conflicts and struggles I saw trending between participant testimonies.

To address the study's three research questions most effectively, I chose to use a combination of inductive and deductive coding to analyze the extensive data I retrieved from the semi-structured interview. As previously stated, Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers provided headings that emphasized the relationship between contextual factors, emotional labor strategies, and job satisfaction. Within these headings, which provided overarching, deductive codes, I chose to engage in inductive coding to reflect accurately the

aspects of each participant's experience that they deemed most necessary to highlight. This combination of inductive and deductive coding allowed me to prioritize participants' anecdotes and then organize them in a way that explained the connections between participants' stressors, their ability to manage their emotions, and their feelings towards their longevity in their profession.

All data from the questionnaire, transcripts of Zoom interviews, and audio recordings of in-person interview sessions were stored on a secure laptop. I destroyed all audio recordings by August 2023.

Trustworthiness

I strove for validity in this study through member checking and acknowledgement of my own positionality as the researcher.

I conducted member checking after I completed a preliminary draft of Chapter 4 and before I finalized the study's manuscript. Participants had the option to participate in this validation method between 2-3 months after their initial interview. The purpose of this technique was to validate my qualitative results by allowing participants to co-construct the knowledge gained in the study (Birt et al., 2016). Interviewees had the option to review and add to the raw data—in this case, manuscript excerpts with their direct quotations—and the interpreted, coded data with their reflections, reevaluations, or modifications from their engagement with their initial responses. I chose to employ this method to test for internal validity, but also felt that as part of my ethos as a teacher and as a researcher prioritizing and uplifting the voices of teachers in particular that I should use every tool at my disposal to make sure their testimonies and narratives are accurately and thoroughly documented.

My role as teacher, in addition to researcher, contributed to my trustworthiness in the eyes of the study's subjects. My positionality allowed me to enjoy a certain level of rapport with the study's participants, even those I had never met in person nor knew professionally nor socially before the study began. Participants often used the remark, "you know," or inserted phrases such as, "as you remember" or, "I don't have to explain to you . . ." into their responses, even if they had no knowledge of my experiences teaching beyond my disclosure that I was also a classroom teacher prior to and during the pandemic.

Limitations

There were four limitations to this study: the self-reported nature of participant recruitment, the possible self-selection of interested participants, the reliance on participant memory, and my own positionality.

I chose my contacts because I knew that they were current or former educators who had practiced throughout the pandemic and had access to a network of current and former colleagues who may qualify for participation in my study. However, I did not include a mechanism by which to corroborate the qualifications of any individual who expressed interest in participating. I relied on the expertise of my contacts to send the recruitment email to their own contacts who may have qualified, but participants' own professional qualifications were self-reported and, therefore, not guaranteed to be accurate without corroboration.

The nature of the research topic may have self-selected teachers with negative professional experiences during the pandemic. Teachers who felt they had concerns to bring forward might have been more likely to respond to the recruitment email than would be those teachers who did not feel that the pandemic had any effects on their ability to manage their

emotions. In addition, though recruitment for the study began in late May 2022 and continued throughout the summer, many teachers might not have been willing to participate in an education-related study while on summer vacation. Teachers who traveled or were otherwise indisposed were not equally represented, since many interviews were conducted over the summer holiday. I attempted to mitigate this limitation by offering interview sessions into the Fall 2022 semester; however, for member checking to be a feasible validation strategy, I chose not to conduct any interviews after November 2022 to leave time for analysis and follow-up meetings.

Likewise, I did not provide an instrument to corroborate the data that individual participants provided in the interview sessions. Each participant provided their own perceptions of events that occurred in the most recent years of their career, through the prism of their own memory. Memories do vary and individuals tend to remember certain details with greater accuracy than they do others. I relied on participants' recollections with no method by which to corroborate if their version of events was accurate or complete.

Lastly, my positionality was a limitation. At the time of the study, I was a credentialed teacher with eight years of classroom experience, which included the two full academic years—2020-2021 and 2021-2022—that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am currently teaching as of the reporting of this study. The impetus for this research topic was my first-hand observations of the effects the pandemic has had on teachers' mental health, wellness, and commitment to the profession, and those observations included my own self-reflection concerning the events of the pandemic on my health and perception of my role as an educator. I

was challenged to remain objective in determining the effect of the pandemic on individual teachers who may have experienced myriad stressors and impacts that differ from my own.

Delimitations

There were three delimitations in designing this study: lack of randomization, lack of external validity, and exclusion of teachers who exited the profession during the pandemic.

I chose to solicit participants from across the United States who worked in traditional public, independent, religious, vocational technical, and additional alternative schools. Teachers in these types of schools have a vast spectrum of rich and diverse experiences—in pedagogy, administrative oversight, curricular autonomy, to name a few—in their respective institutions. However, even though a participant pool of 16 was more than appropriate for a qualitative, phenomenological study (Creswell, 2014), it was not randomized considering the convenience sampling that I employed to select my contacts. My contacts were educators I knew primarily through my former educational institutions and places of employment in Massachusetts and California, so while those contacts might have sent the recruitment email to their own networks that represented a more regionally diverse landscape of the United States, it did not result in a participant pool exactly reflective of the nation's diverse educators.

Though the study's pool of 16 subjects was large for a quantitative study in the timeframe the program affords, the design lacked external validity since it was not likely to thoroughly generalize the experiences of millions of teachers across the United States. Even though the final pool of participants represented different types of schools—such as religious, public charter, and traditional public—teacher experiences during the pandemic varied and continue to vary greatly

even within a common type of school based on a variety of factors, such as state, region, and personal obstacles the pandemic posed.

Lastly, I limited my participant pool to teachers still employed at their respective school site at the time of the email soliciting participants in late spring 2022. This means that, though I accepted participants employed at their schools who would not be returning to that school or to the profession in fall 2022, I did not interview teachers who left the teaching profession during or after the 2020-2021 academic year. I made this choice to capture data from teachers who experienced both in-person and remote learning within one school, to maintain continuity in an effort to focus on the effects of the pandemic itself, rather than on the effects of a transition between schools, districts, or even professions. However, this study did not hear from teachers who left their respective schools or the profession entirely during or immediately following the conclusion of distance learning, so each participant chose to stay at their school—at least until the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. This is not to say that teachers who chose to remain at their school sites upon the return to in-person instruction did not experience pandemic-related stress or trauma. It is simply important to note that teachers who chose to exit their schools during the height of the pandemic were not represented in this study, so although implications on teacher attrition are discussed in both the literature review and the analysis chapters to come, it is not the primary object of this exploration.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Study Background

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions of pandemic-related workload and emotional stress. The structured interview questions asked teachers to identify stressors both novel to the pandemic and preexisting, but exacerbated by, the pandemic. Teachers then reflected on the effects of these stressors on their emotional labor: their ability to manage their emotions under a spectrum of stressful conditions to meet their workplace's occupational expectations (Hochschild & Drescher, 1983). Three research questions guided the study:

1. What stressors—new or exacerbated—do teachers perceive in their profession during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' emotional labor strategies?
3. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' job satisfaction and feelings of burnout?

To answer these questions, I conducted, via the Zoom online video platform, semi-structured interviews with 16 high school educators across the country. In order to control for the occupational environment amongst the myriad logistical changes the pandemic caused, each participant had at least three years of experience, as of June 2022, at the same school. Prior to scheduling each interview, the participants completed a demographics questionnaire to establish their qualification for the study and collect personal and professional data, such as gender, ethnicity, and years of teaching experience. Table 1 describes the results of this survey for the

participants who met the study's requirements and proceeded to the interview phase. Participants are listed in the order in which they responded to the demographics questionnaire:

Table 1

Study Participant Demographic Descriptions

Participant Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Gender	School Setting	Region/State	Current or Most Recent Educator Role	Total Years of Experience in Education
Iris Lee	White/European	Female	Private, religious	West/CA	Content-area teacher	3-5 years
Margaret Fuentes	Latinx/o/a	Female	Public charter	West/CA	Content-area teacher	6-10 years
Ashley Brown	White/European	Female	Public charter	West/CA	Content-area teacher	6-10 years
Anna Pereira	White/European	Female	Traditional public	Northeast/MA	Special Education Teacher	3-5 years
Nicholas Lee	White/European	Male	Independent	West/CA	Content-area teacher	3-5 years
Christina Jones	White/European	Female	Public charter	Northeast/NY	Dean of Curriculum and Instruction	6-10 years
Shannon Scott	White/European	Female	Traditional public	West/CA	Content-area teacher	3-5 years
David Johnson	Black and/or African American	Male	Public charter	West/CA	Content-area teacher	6-10 years
Sarah Anderson	White/European	Gender Queer	Private, non-denominational	South/TX	Content-area teacher	3-5 years
Monica Perez	Latinx/o/a	Female	Private, religious	West/NV	Content-area teacher	11-15 years
Andrew Clark	White/European	Male	Private, non-denominational	South/TN	Content-area teacher	16+ years

Table 1 (continued)

Study Participant Demographic Descriptions

Participant Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Gender	School Setting	Region/State	Current or Most Recent Educator Role	Total Years of Experience in Education
Lilian Clark	White/European	Female	Private, religious	South/TN	Content-area teacher	16+ years
Elsa Harris	White/European	Female	Traditional public	Northeast/MA	Content-area teacher	16+ years
Ryan Martin	White/European	Male	Traditional public	Midwest/OH	Content-area teacher	6-10 years
Elizabeth Moore	White/European	Female	Independent for students with LBLD	Northeast/MA	Special Education Teacher	3-5 years
Katherine Nowak	White/European	Female	Traditional public	Northeast/MA	English Language Development Teacher	3-5 years

I utilized a strictly qualitative approach to examine teachers' experiences and highlight teachers' narrative autonomy in recalling their own experiences. I collected the qualitative data for this study through semi-structured interviews via the Zoom online platform to reduce the logistical burden on teachers practicing across the United States while still maintaining personal contact through the face-to-face video chat feature. Each research question addressed in the study required a distinct analytical strategy.

To address the first research question regarding pandemic-era occupational stressors, I used descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2014) to summarize each participant's description of their experiences. I then categorized the coded data according to the preexisting headings found in Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers.

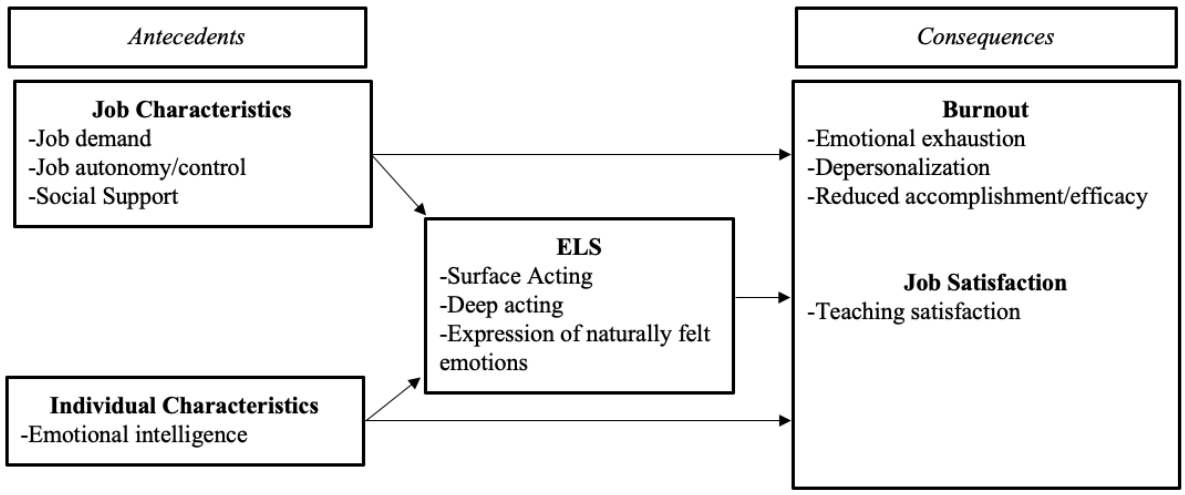
To address the second research question concerning participants' emotional labor strategies, I used *in vivo* coding (Strauss, 1987) to develop codes organically (Leavy, 2017). After deriving codes directly from participants' responses, I used theming to define consistencies amongst teachers' experiences with managing their emotions when encountering pandemic-related stressors.

To address the third research question with respect to participants' perceptions of job satisfaction and burnout, I once again referred to Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers to establish the initial categorization of participant responses. I then used values coding (Saldaña, 2014) to identify commonalities in participants' experiences and sort the data according to those commonalities.

I organized the chapter in three ways: by research questions, by Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers, and by values coding according to participant language. First, the study's three research questions determine the chapter's three sections: pandemic-related stressors, emotional labor strategies, and job satisfaction and burnout. Second, each research question coincides with a section of the Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers (Yin et al., 2019), provided below:

Figure 1

Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers



Note: Adapted from "Emotional Labor Model" by A. A. Grandey, 2000, in *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*(1), pp. 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1037//1076-8998.5.1.95, copyright 2000 by American Psychological Association; "The Relationships Between Teachers' Emotional Labor and their Burnout and Satisfaction: A Meta-analytic Review", by H. Yin, S. Huang, & G. Chen, . 2019, in *Educational Research Review, 28,* copyright 2019 by Elsevier Ltd.

Reading from left to right, the first section of Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers, "antecedents," provides the organizational structure by which I categorized the pandemic-related stressors participants experienced. To accommodate the vast number and spectrum of stressors participants identified, I created a graphic organized by the categories and subcategories already provided in the Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers.

The second, or middle, section of Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers lists three Emotional Labor Strategies (ELS), which contributed to the organizational structure by which I categorized participants' insights into the ELS they used during the pandemic period. I chose to include a fourth emotional labor strategy from Çukur's Teacher Emotional Labor Scale, emotional deviance, even though it is not included in the Emotional

Labor Framework for Teachers because that strategy accounts for genuine emotional expression in spite of occupational expectations (Çukur, 2009).

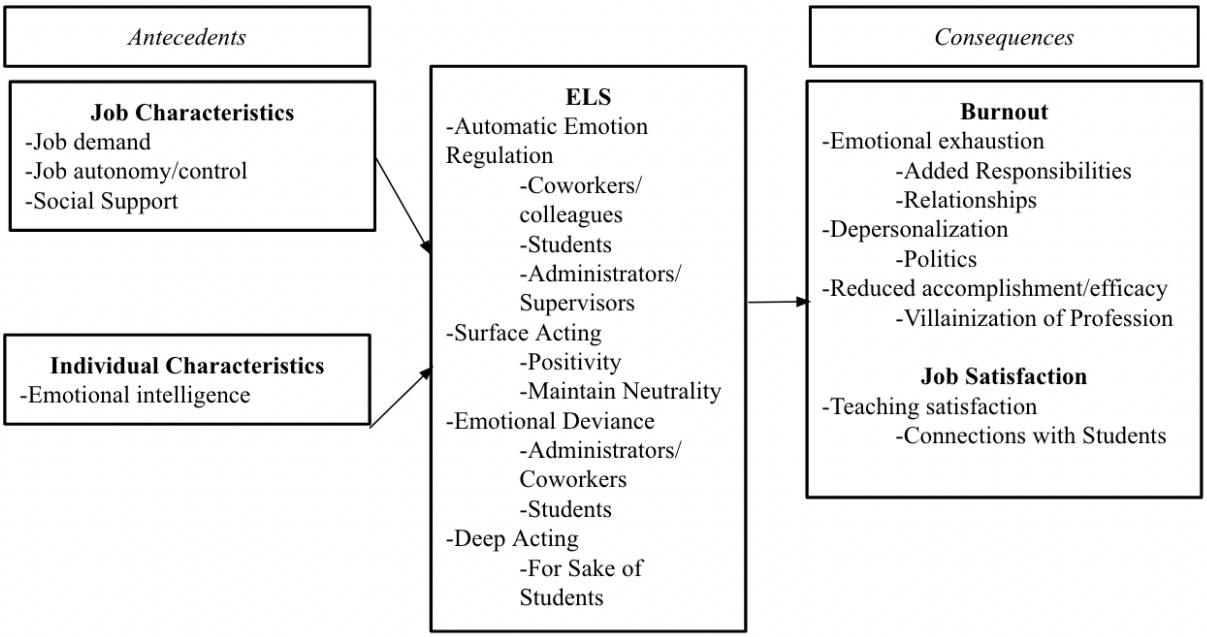
Within these four ELS, I employed my third organizational method: values coding. In examining participant responses to questions on each type of ELS, I identified consistencies amongst participants' perceptions and descriptions of their experiences and used those consistencies to create subcategories within each ELS. Thus, the ELS heading comes from Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers, the four specific strategies come from the Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers and the Teacher Emotional Labor Scale, and I derived the subcategories directly from participant responses themselves in an effort to preserve participant voice.

Lastly, I addressed the third section of Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers, "consequences," in the same manner, with the Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers providing the general structure, namely, the elements of burnout and job satisfaction. I then provided subcategories based on participant responses.

Figure 2 illustrates, in its entirety, the organizational structure of this chapter:

Figure 2

Organizational Structure of Chapter 4



Research Question 1: What Stressors—New or Exacerbated—Do Teachers Perceive in Their Profession During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Danielson Framework

The Danielson Group's Framework for Teaching (FFT) outlines the responsibilities of the teaching profession (The Danielson Group, 2019) and is one of the most widely used and referenced observational systems for evaluating teacher effectiveness (Garrett & Steinberg, 2015). During the 2020-2021 academic year, The Danielson Group (2020) released an updated Framework for Remote Teaching (FFRT) that reorganized its previous four domains of professional responsibility into three domains, prioritizing eight of the previously 22 subdomains that they felt deserved special consideration and attention during the distance, or remote, learning period.

I invited the participants to study the original FFT when asked about changes or additions to their professional responsibilities. I did not present the FFRT to participants since the scope of the study included not only distance/remote learning, but also the years immediately preceding and post-ceding that period. And while exposing the participants to the FFT was to help them organize their thoughts about how the pandemic affected their professional responsibilities, the FFTs four domains are not the basis in this chapter for categorizing participant responses. Rather, in keeping with the dual goals of: (a) providing context to Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers to reflect the teaching profession during the pandemic era and (b) prioritizing and uplifting teacher voice, I categorized participant responses according to Yin et al.'s "antecedents," the job characteristics and individual characteristics that contribute, within that framework, to teachers' use of ELS resulting in burnout and/or job satisfaction. Table 2 reflects the stressors that participants identified that were novel during the pandemic or preexisting and exacerbated during the pandemic:

Table 2

Participant Identified Pandemic-Created or Exacerbated Stressors

Antecedents			
Job Characteristics			Individual Characteristics
Job Demand	*Job Autonomy/Control*	*Social Support*	*Emotional Intelligence*
—design virtual instructional materials for distance learning period that still meet learning objectives	—increase in administrative monitoring of teachers; example: timecards —student non-compliance with COVID protocols	—lack of communication with administration on pandemic protocols	—feelings of conflict when confronted with students' home lives via Zoom —lack of facial cues to help establish relationships when masking

Table 2 (continued)

Participant Identified Pandemic-Created or Exacerbated Stressors

Antecedents			
Job Characteristics			Individual Characteristics
Job Demand	*Job Autonomy/Control*	*Social Support*	*Emotional Intelligence*
—design hybrid instruction for international students while instructor wears mask —instruct in multiple physical spaces with inconsistent technology available —execute COVID-19 safety measures: temperature checks, cleaning and sanitization, wearing gloves while distributing classroom materials —enforce pandemic protocols during duties; ex: lunch duty —navigate increased parental expectation of access to teachers via Zoom —engage in increased parental communication outside of school hours —uphold both academic standards and prioritize student mental health simultaneously —uphold both academic standards and prioritize student mental health simultaneously	—staff non-compliance with COVID protocols -standardized testing; lack of communication and transparency —lack of attendance consistency —inappropriate and/or inconsistent standards for academic rigor	—lack of support from parents and families; accusations of teachers being lazy or not wanting to work —lack of meaningful relationships with students over Zoom	—impersonal methods of assessment during distance and hybrid learning —expectation to serve as counselors with no training —lack of interaction with students during distance learning

Research Question 2: How Have Pandemic-Related Stressors Affected Teachers' Emotional Labor Strategies?

To address the study's second research question, I adapted a series of questions from Çukur's (2009) Teacher Emotional Labor Scale to solicit participants to describe their experiences, if any, with the four emotional labor strategies over the past two years of teaching during the pandemic era (from the 2020-2021 academic year to the 2021-2022 academic year). Participant reflections were organized by emotional labor strategy: automatic emotion regulation; surface acting; emotional deviance; and deep acting. Within each of these strategies, I identified commonalities between participant testimonies and used those commonalities as subcategories to organize and contextualize participant responses.

Automatic Emotion Regulation

The first emotional labor strategy upon which participants reflected was automatic emotion regulation. Automatic emotion regulation refers to the expression of genuine emotions (Çukur, 2009; Yin et al., 2019). All participants identified at least one circumstance in the past two years of their careers in which they expressed their genuine emotions, either to coworkers and colleagues, students, or administrators and supervisors.

Coworkers and Colleagues: A Valued, Short-Term Outlet

When describing expression of genuinely felt emotions with coworkers and colleagues, participants identified group support and one-on-one support as necessary outlets for feelings of frustration in their professional spaces. However, recollections of group support with colleagues and coworkers revealed overall more positive feelings of productivity and success than did

instances of one-on-one support that participants experienced, even if they considered both to be necessities in surviving particularly difficult academic years.

Margaret Fuentes described an online support group her principal organized during the distance learning period in which staff could connect virtually. Despite the online platform, Mrs. Fuentes shared poignant moments of colleague interaction:

> We met once a week for an hour and that was really just a space of, you know, reconnecting [new teachers] with other staff members. The pandemic was a really isolating experience with other adults, let alone with students. So those turned into reflection first, and then problem-solving spaces . . . a lot of very frank emotions [were] shared with tears [from] those just talking about frustrations and difficulties. (Margaret Fuentes)

In Mrs. Fuentes' example, both veteran and emerging educators shared strong emotions while discussing various stressors. The space was not solely reflective, however; it was also productive. The act of bringing teachers together in the virtual space led to problem solving after participants felt welcome to share their personal frustrations. Ms. Christina Jones experienced a similar support group upon the return to in-person instruction. While Mrs. Fuentes described the emotions of her colleagues, Ms. Jones detailed her own experience participating in her school's reflective professional development session:

> My principal was doing a PD [Professional Development] for the intention of having people share their emotions throughout the year. And I legit broke down hysterically crying and I was leaving as well, so I was sad but also knew it was the right choice. I had to remove myself. My principal came and sat in her office with me on the floor and was like, it's going to be okay, everything's going to be fine. . . . This is a whole year of emotions just coming out of my face right now. I don't know what happened, I don't know how we got through it, but holy crap. (Christina Jones)

Although Ms. Jones described herself "breaking down," she seemed to be describing a productive event. The session with her colleagues allowed her to genuinely express her emotions that had built up over the course of the challenging academic year. She did not feel comfortable

expressing those intense emotions in front of her colleagues, but it was the space created in which she felt comfortable beginning that process of sharing her emotions that ended in her principal's office. Ms. Jones' experience began with group support from her colleagues and ended with one-on-one support from an administrator, which will be discussed in more depth later on in this section.

Most participants shared that they had at least one coworker who they could rely on for camaraderie and support in facing day-to-day stressors at school. David Johnson identified a best friend at school, and Andrew and Lilian Clark, a married couple, found comfort in being able to share their stressful experiences with each other during the school day while working in the same building on campus. However, a paradox emerged amongst participants: While coworkers and colleagues provided necessary mental and emotional support, there was also a recognition that the support was only helpful in the short term, but not in the long term. Sarah Anderson described the downside of venting with colleagues:

> There wasn't a ton of [openness with] coworkers; it was almost kind of depressing because it was always just kind of like well, what are we going to do . . . one of us would be like, yeah I'm fucking miserable and this place is exploitative and awful and then the other one of us would be like, yeah same here, this terrible thing that happened, and then we would just be like, well. So that wasn't, as you know, I mean I guess it was nice to be validated. (Sarah Anderson)

In Mx. Anderson's example, validation did not necessarily lead to closure or overall feelings of satisfaction amongst their colleagues. Anna Pereira recalled a similar phenomenon of validation and commiseration without resolution of her stressors:

> I had multiple meetings with my program manager at the school . . . where I was very truthful with how I was feeling about the position, about the stresses of COVID, and about the parents in particular. . . . It was always nice to know I wasn't alone—my coworkers definitely identified having those feelings as well, and my boss was very

> involved in all of my cases, but the stress was still there. It didn't solve anything. (Anna Pereira)

Ms. Pereira appreciated feeling a sense of community between herself, her coworkers, and even certain supervisors and administrators regarding her stressors, but this camaraderie did not result in tangible solutions to these professional challenges.

Students: Success in Solidarity

While participants felt a lack of closure in their interactions with coworkers and colleagues, they tended to identify more success in managing professional stress when the action was in service to their students. By practicing automatic emotion regulation in their classrooms, participants created a safe space of trust and solidarity for their students. In the classroom, automatic emotion regulation manifested as the explicit modeling of mental health practices and the explicit communication of love and care towards students.

Participants navigating their own mental health struggles during the pandemic took the opportunity to model their self-care practices for their students in real time. Shannon Scott, who coaches varsity sports at her school, in addition to teaching, was open with students about the effects of stress on the physical body:

> Just talking to them about the impact that [stress] has on your body. You know all the stress that we've all been through the constant changes, and all the workload and everything, and not sleeping, and so we talked a lot about that because I was also trying to encourage my students to sleep, so they would get on me about, well, I saw that email come through at 3:00am. So you need to do the same if you're going to tell us to sleep more. You need to sleep more then. (Shannon Scott)

As a result of this class discussion about the connection between the mind and body, Ms. Scott's students started holding her accountable for her own mental and physical health. They noticed her early morning email and asked her about her own sleep schedule, demonstrating not

only understanding of the points she was making in class about the importance of proper sleep habits to mental health and wellness, but also reciprocated care about their teacher's mental and physical state itself. Ashley Brown also invited students to share their own experiences with mental health challenges by first demonstrating that the classroom was an appropriate space in which to do so:

> I try to be very open about my mental health, I guess, being a teacher, I really tried to destigmatize depression and anxiety, so I wouldn't say that I brought it up all the time, but I wouldn't hide it and if it was relevant to the conversation, I would definitely bring it up. I think it made students, you know, feel comfortable talking to me about that stuff if they're like, oh, she struggles with the same thing that I do. (Ashley Brown)

Ms. Brown's destigmatization efforts resulted in her students feeling a sense of connection with her as they navigated their own struggles with anxiety and depression during the pandemic. Her intentionality increased students' comfort levels in discussing mental health in her classroom. Katherine Nowak and Elizabeth Moore took their invitation to students a step further by modeling explicit stress management techniques in real time in their respective classrooms:

> I will show them if I'm getting stressed in class. I'll just be like, Give me a second. I'll take a deep breath and [say], Okay, I'm ready to answer your question now, which is showing them that it's okay to get yourself regulated. (Katherine Nowak)

> I'm open with my students, but when I just needed five minutes, like if I was feeling really hectic for some reason, or I'd had a really difficult conversation with a student, or I had a really frustrating interaction with students about like their masks, or I don't know, making out in a classroom during a break time. I would tell my students like I just needed five minutes. Sometimes we would go on a five-minute walk, just a lap around the building, and just, you know, be like, sorry I've just, I'm really frustrated. I'm really anxious, and I just need this five minutes, and then we'll get back into it. . . . I couldn't typically tell them about the teachers obviously that I was having a hard time with, but just acknowledging that I'm having a hard time with something, I did that a lot with my students. (Elizabeth Moore)

Both Ms. Nowak and Ms. Moore modeled explicit practices that students could then use to regulate their own feelings of stress and anxiety in class. Instead of modifying their emotions or hiding their feelings of stress, these participants chose to express both their genuine feelings and their genuine coping strategies of addressing those feelings in real time. Participants did not tend to express their genuine emotions surrounding mental health without also providing models or explanations of the accompanying supports and coping strategies.

All participants in this study expressed care for their students, and most participants spontaneously identified a necessary increase in their expression of care towards their students during the pandemic. In short, students needed more personal care during the pandemic than they did before 2020. When asked about instances and circumstances during the pandemic in which they expressed their genuine feelings to their students, many participants discussed explicit expressions of care. For Andrew Clark, who experienced frequent political and ideological disagreement with his school's administration, the only time he felt comfortable expressing his genuine emotions was when he expressed care to his students. He shared:

> The only time I ever expressed myself truly, completely, one hundred percent is when I say [at the] end of every class: be good, be safe, make good decisions, and tell your parents you love them, because that's about the only thing I can say that is consistent all the way through. The other thing is [in the case of a] school shooter. I always say if there's a school shooter, I'm running toward the school shooter, hopefully, and you should run away, and everything else is couched in terms. (Andrew Clark)

Mr. Clark's sentiments served to create a consistently caring environment for his students. In his decades-long teaching tenure, his sentiments have not changed substantially. The stress of the pandemic on both he and his students did not change the central message of love and care he wants his students to hear and internalize. Monica Perez's school environment also affected how she interacted with students. While Mr. Clark's school's political environment

affected his levels of transparency and honesty with students, Ms. Perez's school's religious ethos allowed her to express more genuine, intimate emotions:

> I think they were really grateful for the relationships that they had with their teachers and with me, and I remember one time in the pandemic, right before the AP Test, I was just telling the students, I love you all. I care so much about you. I'm so proud of you like, you know, just trying to just tell them I love them. . . . I think that's a little bit different, because I'm at a Catholic school, so the expectation in terms of talking about real life, and maybe having more of human interactions is different, because there's an expectation that we're praying with the students. (Monica Perez)

Since Ms. Perez's school environment encouraged spiritual connection between students and staff, she felt more comfortable expressing feelings of genuine love towards her students than might teachers in secular schools. However, participants expressed love for students in different ways besides explicit naming of the term, "love." Ryan Martin, Nicholas Lee, and Margaret Fuentes identified solidarity, honesty, and trust as qualities they displayed and actively practiced in order to communicate love and care to their students. Mr. Martin described his efforts to build solidarity in his classroom through honest communication:

> I was honest with them, and said, I'm nervous, too. I have anxiety as well. I have a lot of elderly family members, and some of them have medical conditions, aunts and uncles that I'm worried about, and I was pretty honest with them. And I said, I just want you to know that you're not alone. You're feeling these things. Everyone in the room is too. So are the teachers. So am I, and it's okay to talk about them. You don't have to hide how you feel. . . . It's something I've tried to be more open to as I've gone further into my career, and in the last few years of making a real effort. Just speak from the heart a little more about when it's called for, and when the topic is serious enough, and the pandemic is one of several topics. In the last few years, I felt it's appropriate to just speak to them on a more human level, and it felt good. It felt very good. I like it when I do it. I like it when you know I don't overuse that. I'm choosy about when I um sort of stop class and talk to them in that way. But it felt good. I liked being able to express that, and it felt, I guess, the way I phrase it, I felt that there was a level of solidarity that maybe wasn't there or wouldn't normally be there. (Ryan Martin)

Not only did Mr. Martin identify a benefit of honest and open communication for students—namely, that students felt less isolated and alienated by their personal problems—but

he also described a feeling of satisfaction as a teacher in creating an environment of solidarity that did not, or would not, exist otherwise. The pandemic created more stressors, many of them novel, but it also forged a path for increased quality of teacher-student relationships. Nicholas Lee recounted a similar teacher-student relationship during hybrid learning at his school during the pandemic:

> And so I had set up my mentoring students who just happened to be on campus during the same week; we all were able to have our little sharing circle. And I of course started the conversation, getting to say, this really sucks, but I'm so happy that y'all are here and that you all have been able to get the help that you need both through our counseling and through your own independent means . . . and kind of what I tried to model [was], yeah, this is really, really sucky. Or, yeah, today was a great day, I got to have a bagel at home, and not have to commute 45 minutes into work. And that's great. So that's a more broad daily one that I tried to just model from our students very frequently, my honest and genuine feelings. (Nicholas Lee)

Mr. Lee identified acknowledgement of both the good days and bad days as necessary to building a community of honesty and transparency amongst his students. By modeling the acceptance that some days are better than others, he allowed his students to freely experience and express that range of feelings and reactions to the pandemic as well. And lastly, Margaret Fuentes highlighted the importance of expressing genuine emotions when her students came to her with their pandemic-related challenges, in order to build a sense of trust:

> [The students], I think, trusted me as that resource that would be more straightforward with them. Things are really tough right now. I'm sure a lot of you guys are going through a really rough time. Here is what is going on, here's what I'm going through. I definitely did not try to control or change my feelings in any way about it, but I was also not super panicky . . . kids would tell me when things would happen, and I, of course, would not try to hide or control my feelings about that, because it was pure, Oh, my gosh! I am so sorry, that is so difficult, you know? Is there anything I can do to help? (Margaret Fuentes)

For Mrs. Fuentes, the most important time to express genuine emotions was when building empathy with a student, since displaying genuine concern for a student's wellbeing and

acknowledging their struggles increased that student's trust in the teacher-student relationship. The theme of trust carried on to participants' descriptions of their relationships with administrators and supervisors, though participants highlighted instances of both trust and distrust that affected their relationships with their superiors.

Administration and Supervisors: The Significance of Trust

Just as demonstrations of empathy increased trust between teachers and students, similar moments of solidarity strengthened relationships between participants and their administrators and supervisors. However, other incidents soured that trust and made participants hesitant to engage with their superiors.

Monica Perez and Sarah Anderson both enjoyed positive relationships with their supervisors because they felt free to express their genuine emotions. Mrs. Perez described:

> I have had meltdowns with my principal about how I can't do it. I need to be done. I can't, I have to stop. I told her, I'm not coming to baccalaureate mass. These events, I can't do everything, and she's pretty receptive because she also has kids. (Monica Perez)

Mrs. Perez's family situation—namely, that she had small children at home whose schooling was also affected by the pandemic—was a commonality she shared with her principal, and that shared experience allowed her to be more open and honest about her limitations and boundaries. Similarly, Sarah Anderson felt enough trust with their supervisor that they could express themself openly to him. Due to a personal, medical situation, this supervisor's role in Mx. Anderson's day-to-day experience at their school diminished, and they described the effect below:

> With my supervisor, he's so great. He drives me batty and he's kind of annoying. Like [an] uncle or something, but I love him so much and trust him, implicitly. . . . This last year, he was way less involved, which was really stressful because he was the only one

> that I felt like advocated for us with [the] administration . . . that was a lot harder because he was really the only one who would go to bat for us. (Sarah Anderson)

For Mx. Anderson, not only did their trusting relationship with their supervisor allow them the freedom to express their genuine emotions, but it also provided a sense of security that their voice, and the collective voice of their teacher colleagues, would be heard. Losing the strength of that advocate in the administration caused them stress and feelings of uncertainty.

When participants did not view administration as an advocate, there occurred a breakdown in trust between participants and their respective supervisors. For Iris Lee, that lack of trust manifested in poor communication:

> We had an end of the year circle where we're supposed to . . . take something, pass it around, be honest and I just, finally, at the end of this year, broke down and my supervisor was there, my colleagues were there . . . I said that I was like overwhelmed . . . I'm doing all this work and I have nine books to prepare to read this year. I'm teaching two electives instead of my one English class I have always taught. . . . I honestly was like, I can't do it. I lashed out at my husband, I lashed out at my friends, I'm emotionally drained, and I can't do this anymore . . . I'm emotionally maxed out. To which my supervisor at the end of the meeting [pulled] me aside and said, thank you so much, just try to do less. . . . I'm frustrated [because] what does, "do less" mean? (Iris Lee)

Even though Mrs. Lee's supervisor expressed a seemingly helpful sentiment—suggesting that she decrease her workload to reduce her stress and emotional burden—that advice was not helpful to Mrs. Lee, who ran her school's dance program single-handedly, on top of myriad additional responsibilities in the school's performing arts and English departments. The supervisor provided advice without any means or support for Mrs. Lee to actually reduce her workload. This interaction dissuaded Mrs. Lee from expressing her genuine feelings since there was a lack of support on the other side. Mr. Clark experienced a similar lack of trust with his administration to the point that it impeded his ability to express genuine emotions and sentiments openly with his students. Instead, he had to express his feelings through more creative means:

> The administration cannot be truthful. They can't be truthful to the faculty as a whole. Theoretically, we're a liberal school in a conservative state. . . . We're having a faculty meeting about pronouns that a teacher said, "My name is, and my pronouns are she and her . . ." That is not what we're allowed to do. . . . I never would talk to my students about it. . . . I have a water bottle with the . . . [Gay Straight Alliance] and the big equal signs, and so I always say at the beginning of school, and I plunk it right there for, the first week, I say, I'm a safe environment, and those who know that I'm a safe environment and those students who are socially on the outskirts know that my I'm a safe place to talk and share. But I don't say that out loud in the sense of like, hey, gender issues. No, I put it, just, I'm safe. So I do talk about it, [but] I never, ever, ever tell the truth to the administration. (Andrew Clark)

Mr. Clark communicated his genuine feelings of support for queer students with visual representations and markers of that allyship. His perception of trust with administrators stemmed from lack of opportunities for honest communication. However, Katherine Nowak experienced honest communication that did not produce the desired results. She described:

> Actually, when my grandmother passed away, and I was having problems with the other teachers, the principal of the school actually agreed [and said], I can tell something's going on. Why don't we meet and talk about this? And I really appreciated that. And I came in with some really, I think, good options of ways that we could resolve that it's not just for myself, but for other people who travel to different rooms and get berated by other teachers, which is unfortunately still happening in our school. And so it was some of my ideas, some of my ideas of my friend who had left . . . and the principal was like, Oh, my gosh! These are great ideas . . . and then nothing happened, and nothing changed, and everything was just the same. So, unfortunately I've not had a good experience with supervisors. (Katherine Nowak)

In this instance, Ms. Nowak's principal solicited her feedback and expressed positive feedback for her ideas, but then did not follow through on any of Ms. Nowak's tangible suggestions in a visible, transparent way. Ms. Nowak lost trust in her supervisor because her ideas were not taken seriously.

Feelings of trust and care affected participants' likelihood to engage in automatic emotion regulation with their coworkers, students, and supervisors. The next discussion switches from the

genuine expression of emotions to the act of pretending that one feels differently than how they genuinely feel.

Surface Acting

The second emotional labor strategy upon which participants reflected was surface acting. Surface acting refers to the acting in which one engages when they are masking their genuine feelings in order to emote in the manner that is expected of them in their profession. All participants, even those who self-identified as generally honest and genuine in their emotional expression personality-wise, recalled at least one instance in which they engaged in surface acting while in their professional roles as teachers.

Embedded in the question of surface acting was the question: How are teachers expected to emote in their profession? I asked all participants to answer this question to contextualize their experiences with surface acting, since surface acting involves an effort to achieve the desired emotion given the occupation. Participants described how teachers are expected to emote in their profession in a variety of ways, but themes emerged in their responses: professional, flexible, and nurturing. Table 3 organizes participants' verbatim responses into these themes and further categorizes participants' perceptions of how they are expected to emote into those that expect them to emote and those that expect them to avoid expressing emotion:

Table 3

Participant Perceptions of Emotive Expectations for Teachers

Professional	Flexible	Nurturing
Expectation to Emote • Constant customer service *Expectation to Avoid Expressing Emotion* • Uniformity and clarity in support of the mission of the administration • Automatically demand respect by being in the room • Can't be a real person • No normal reactions • Don't be reactive at all • Can't express genuine emotions • Not expected to emote • Professional • Restrained • Neutral • Flat, no emotional involvement • Compliant • Submissive • Complete trust in administration • Focused on academics • Don't speak against or show frustration against the system • We're not their friends; we're the educators • Cordial	*Expectation to Emote* • Coddle and validate students in their emotions • Energetic • Do anything at the drop of a hat with positivity • Positive emotions about the school's choices *Expectation to Avoid Expressing Emotion* • Never frustrated • Never angry • Never sad • Never raise your voice • Never tired • Never allowed to be negative • Not allowed to say bad words • Not taking things personally • No displaying emotions in front of the students unless it amplifies or validates the students' stress • Wear multiple hats • Know everything • Go with the flow • Don't be uptight	*Expectation to Emote* • Caring • Magical • Wholesome persona • Ultra-friendly • Warm • Motherly to all students • Happy • Build relationships with the kids • Calm • Have a sense of humor • Compassionate • Empathetic *Expectation to Avoid Expressing Emotion* • On a pedestal • Self-sacrificing • Nurturing at the expense of own mental health • Emotional as long as it serves other people

Once participants identified how teachers are expected to emote, I asked them to recall instances in which they acted in accordance with these expectations even though they did not

reflect their genuine emotions or feelings in the moment. Participants' responses revealed that surface acting occurred with one of two goals in mind: to fake positivity, or to maintain a neutral response.

Perform Toxic Positivity

Participants identified a need to perpetuate positivity in the face of others' negativity, or for the express purpose of stifling their own negativity. The purpose of this acting was either to help students, or to retain professional status.

Participants used surface acting as a strategy to support students through the academic and social emotional challenges of the pandemic, but participants described also the emotional toll that this acting took on them. Nicholas Lee, whose school transitioned during the pandemic between in-person, online, and hybrid, found surface acting during these periods of transition to be necessary, but taxing:

> That was the hardest thing is getting to have this weird, broken hybrid space pre-Thanksgiving, which, at least still [had] human bodies in a room. And that was at least somewhat nice, even if the teaching was harder [than] suddenly being online and trying to model for my kids, I'm the happy fun teacher, look at me! I'm dope! So that was especially really, really hard was trying to stay positive and upbeat despite the move back from, we are humans in a real human space, even if briefly, to now we're again, like faces in a box. That was brutal. That was incredibly, incredibly hard. (Nicholas Lee)

Mr. Lee felt increased humanity in his connections with his students in person, so when his school transitioned back to hybrid or in-person learning, he struggled to maintain that positivity, but did so for the benefit of his students to maintain consistency in his teaching persona. However, this effort, which he describes as "brutal," was draining for him. Katherine Nowak described this same effort as putting on a mask, and can only relax when the mask is removed:

> If I need to put on a face to just act really excited and happy, I credit my high school drama teacher. . . . I think that sometimes when you're walking down the hallway, and you're just totally dead inside from all the stuff that's going on, and then you see people [saying] the whole, Oh, my God Hi! How are you? Happy Friday! At the end of the week, guys are like, congratulations! All this stuff I think that's my go-to, just super happy, super peppy. And then, when I have a chance, I'm like, Oh, my God! Okay, I can relax for a second, and I feel like, unfortunately, I can only really be myself with the two or three people that I'm really close with. And then a lot of other people I'm like, Oh, no, no, wait, sorry, I have to get that mask back on and be ready to go. (Katherine Nowak)

Ms. Nowak described wearing the mask of positivity in front of other staff members, but specifically in public spaces where students could observe them. The happiness and peppiness were for the benefit of the students and of the larger school community, not necessarily for the benefit of the other staff members with whom she is engaging in the false positivity she describes. Just as Ms. Nowak described this process of feigning positivity as tiring, Ashley Brown used the term, "draining," to describe her experience with dawning a positive mask:

> I really tried to make sure that I was upbeat for the students. There's a time and place to, I think, share your feelings and I didn't want to act the way that I felt all the time, because then students wouldn't be getting the learning experience . . . it was draining. Those days, where I feel like crap, I just want to go lay in bed and be a bundle of blankets and you know cry and watch TV, but [to] be on camera, I would put on a smiling face and just fake it. And sometimes I would have to do that when we came back in person as well, but it was definitely less often but I tried, as much as possible, to kind of mask it. I feel like I've struggled with depression for so long that it's easy to just robot it and fake it until you know you're alone . . . in front of the classroom, it was a performance. . . . [When we returned to in-person learning], I would sit by myself at lunch in the dark, my head on my desk and before the pandemic I would eat lunch with my coworkers every day and have a really good time, but it was tough coming back because it felt like I really had to put on a face for my students and so many of them were struggling that it was pushing aside like my own problems, so that I could be there for them, and that was emotionally draining, it was physically draining. I was exhausted all the time from having to do that. (Ashley Brown)

Ms. Brown's efforts to maintain a positive performance were for the benefit of her students so that they would receive the best learning experience possible with her academic content. However, the act of feigning positivity, both in distance learning and during in-person

instruction, was just as emotionally and physically draining for Ms. Brown, and jeopardized her own mental and physical health. Ms. Brown mentioned that her motivation for this performance was her students and their academic wellbeing, and Ryan Martin echoed this sentiment, naming his feeling of responsibility as his motivation for his performance. However, in the face of crisis in his classroom, Mr. Martin's performance was one of professionalism, not necessarily upbeat positivity, due to the nature of the crisis, which he described below:

> I felt a strong sense of responsibility to maintain a tone in the room of the professional business as usual, so that the students would have sort of guardrails on their daily experience, and not feel that they were too out of left field because of all the pandemic changes to their daily life and to their school experience. So I often felt, I mean every day, really—I can't point to specific day—because this was a constant feeling of over the last couple of years of putting aside my anxieties, my frustrations day-to-day with my students who are not complying with mask rules or students who took advantage of the some of the illness policies to just not be in school. So being a professional and calm, and acting as if it's business as usual, when I would have a wildly different classroom experience that I was used to having, or I had to use a type of um teaching style that I wasn't as comfortable with as the ones that was collaborative, or whether I had to be very professional with parents who, um, you know, maybe had been enabling or allowing their students to take advantage of some of the rules. . . . Two of my students uh, while we were remote, they both committed suicide, and this was very, very difficult for me. That sort of thing can happen to teachers. It happens to every teacher sooner or later, they say, and it's not the first time that's happened to me as a teacher, unfortunately, but I found it way more difficult even than usual, to just maintain my professional demeanor and to not let it affect my interactions with the other students. . . . [It was] maybe the most significant challenge I've ever had in terms of putting it aside, compartmentalizing it, and being a professional and just moving forward when there was an empty seat in the room, and every kid in the room was thinking about it. (Ryan Martin)

In Mr. Martin's case of two students committing suicide, he felt a responsibility not to act happy and upbeat, which likely would have been inappropriate for the situation, but rather to compartmentalize, masking his distress with an air of professionalism and calm that neutralized any tension or alarm in his classroom. This action took a considerable amount of effort, but his goal was to give students security and stability in times of tumult. Lilian Clark also attempted to

achieve a secure and stable persona for the sake of her students, but her main goal in doing so was to build a sustainable culture of trust between her and her students. She explained:

> There were so [many] students in the class who were worried too, and so I feel like they needed to have adults saying it's going to be okay. This is going to be good. So it felt like they needed that kind of support, even if I wasn't actually sure. But we do that all the time with kids telling them it's going to be okay when we really don't know and trying to support them and get them to a place where they will talk to you. I mean, that's ultimately what all of that's about right, so that when things are not okay with them, they will come to you. There also were kids in the class that thought all of our protocols were dumb, that we didn't need any of them in the first place. And so for me to say something like this is good. We're here, but we're distant, and we have our masks on. This is good. I felt like I gave them that message of, I support what we're doing. (Lilian Clark)

During the pandemic, Mrs. Clark encountered two types of students: those who were nervous or anxious about the COVID-19 virus and its repercussions, and those who lacked faith in or respect for the public safety precautions that their school put in place. A positive spirit addressed both groups of students: Mrs. Clark mirrored the concern of the former group by acknowledging their anxieties and assuring them that they were going to be ok—even if she was not sure herself of the outcome of the virus—and modeled professionalism for the latter group by neutralizing their distrust with affirmations that the regulations were necessary for the group to meet together in community, and that this was a positive thing.

Participants who put effort into acting positive most often identified student benefit as the reason for such behavior. However, participants also mentioned professional considerations—such as retaining their professional status at their school—as a reason for faking positivity as a mask for their genuine emotions.

Iris Lee used false positivity as a means by which to appear as an ideal employee. She elaborated:

> I think every time something's thrown at me. . . . If you were to tell me I failed this interview, and that you hated me, I would say okay, well . . . I think [that's how] I handle being in shock is to just absorb it and smile. I'm not really reactive, in that way, anyway. (Iris Lee)

Throughout her interview, Mrs. Lee described instances in which her administration and supervisors piled extra responsibilities and tasks on her docket. Her response, as described in her quotation above, was to remain positive and to mask her genuine emotions of feeling overwhelmed and underappreciated in order to appear as a valuable and indispensable member of her school team. While Mrs. Lee's main concern was her school leadership's perception of her abilities and professionalism, Andrew Clark's concern was more concrete: his employment. In describing an annual meeting with his supervisor which followed a contentious staff meeting about the prohibition of the explicit discussion of personal pronoun usage with students or colleagues, Mr. Clark explained the position in which he found himself:

> I can't tell him that he's an asshole, and that he is the log jam of the faculty, because he's not very supportive. He's a robot . . . I can't tell him that I disagree with the Board of Trustee members made up of the local GOP [Grand Old Party], fascist group. I can't tell him the truth, because I don't want to be fired . . . I've got to think about my retirement. So we had a twenty-minute meeting, in which I hinted at things where I said . . . I've been hearing a lot of things about a lot of complaints, and I said it really nicely, I said I'm just trying to absorb things. I called myself a sponge, and we're trying to absorb things, [seeing] a lot of anxiety from me and from the fellow teachers, and he immediately said, well, you've got to nip that, but you've got to be proactive. You've got to say, go see [me], go see the department chair, resolve it, and I was like, hell no! (Andrew Clark)

Even in lacking trust with this supervisor and recognizing the need to avoid expressing his genuine feelings on politicized topics, Mr. Clark attempted to communicate anxiety he was feeling from his colleagues. However, the supervisor's suggestion to directly address and "nip" his fellow teachers' concerns was not feasible as long as Mr. Clark was not able to express his genuine feelings. His false positivity served to understate and minimize both his frustrations and

those shared with his colleagues in order to retain his professional status, namely his job stability and retirement.

Maintain Neutrality

Maintaining positivity was not the only outcome of participants' surface acting. Positivity served to support students and preserve participants' professional status, but other participants identified instances in which it was ideal to project a mask of neutrality in cases wherein their genuine feelings would initiate conflict with their colleagues, or when neutrality was necessary to communicating an outwardly professional and diplomatic demeanor. In each case, participants used surface acting to achieve a neutral affect.

Elizabeth Moore experienced an internal conflict when she heard her teacher colleagues complaining about the effects of the pandemic at their school:

> I don't think they [other teachers] realize how lucky we were comparatively to be able to have these [COVID-19] tests every week, to be able to have smaller classes, to have air filtration devices in every room. . . . We didn't have a dress code anymore, so we could wear jeans or sweatshirts if we wanted to. So I think that hearing other people's complaints, and disagreeing with them, but not feeling like I could necessarily engage in a back and forth, or should engage in a back and forth, happened a lot. But then I could just come home to my roommate and bitch to her about it. (Elizabeth Moore)

Instead of engaging in a dialogue, or an all-out disagreement, with her colleagues, Ms. Moore waited until she was at home to commiserate with her roommate. She did not hold the same qualms as her colleagues and, in fact, considered herself lucky in comparison with teachers from other schools, but she did not feel it was desirable nor appropriate to interrupt her coworkers' complaints. But, while Ms. Moore did not engage with her coworkers and instead remained silent from the beginning of the interaction, Sarah Anderson experienced a transition

from emotional deviance, which will be discussed in the next section, to surface acting out of emotional exhaustion and frustration. They recalled:

> While I was at school, being a very vocal advocate for LGBTQ+ students, being myself, gender queer and pan sexual and being very open about that for the benefit of students and there were some teachers, in fact, one teacher, in particular, who, we were friendly, I would call us friends, if not for our tremendous political issues. And even [with our] political issues, whatever, I don't care, but . . . he was saying that trans kids are selfish for asking us to use their correct pronouns and affirming names . . . I had to drop it and . . . I can sit here and seethe about it or I can try to tell myself to move on. Did I truly? No, of course not. In fact, thinking about it, right now, it makes me fucking mad and makes me anxious about what I've left behind. It makes me feel guilty about who's going to advocate for those kids now and all of that, now that I've left. (Sarah Anderson)

Mx. Anderson argued for their queer students' gender affirming pronouns and names but described the necessity to "drop" the discussion to avoid anger and frustration that they believed would not result in any meaningful change with this particular colleague. In this scenario, Mx. Anderson's choice to mask their genuine emotions with this particular colleague did not stop them from feeling angry and anxious about the wellbeing of their students, but it did prevent them from feeling what they saw as unnecessarily or fruitlessly angry in the moment of discord with their colleague. Teaching in Texas at a conservative school, Mx. Anderson engaged in surface acting when their political beliefs about their students' rights and wellbeing went against their school's and community's dominant political narrative.

Ms. Moore and Mx. Anderson described using surface acting as a way to avoid conflict, or prevent further conflict, with their colleagues. Other participants described similar behavior, but identify slightly different motivations: Rather than avoid conflict for the sake of their own emotions, they name professionalism and diplomacy as the driving factors behind their decision to mask their genuine feelings on a given topic. Monica Perez described an incident with a

particular student whose behavior frustrated and annoyed her. However, she identified professionalism as the reason for masking her genuine feelings in front of students:

> That's just being a professional and being on your best behavior, and you act a certain way when you're the adult in the room with your students, something that you engage in every day. Two years ago, [there was a student] who was a real idiot, and he would come to school late, like he would come to the meeting late every single day. He'd have an excuse for every single thing, and I just remember turning my back and just facing the wall for a minute to get it together, so I didn't either laugh or shout at his garbage. (Monica Perez)

Mrs. Perez was not necessarily avoiding a negative reaction; rather, she was avoiding any reaction. Her performance of professionalism involved ignoring the student's behavior even if it meant taking a minute to engage in self-regulation in front of students. Students saw the self-regulating behavior, which she identified as a component of professionalism, not the genuine feelings of frustration and annoyance. Control of frustration for the sake of diplomacy was a commonly identified theme amongst participants, whether they were acting in their classroom teacher roles or in roles of teacher leadership. David Johnson felt frustration due to lack of communication with his administration over student absences during COVID:

> There's too many students that are out [with COVID-19], and we're not finding out until like five days later, that these students are quarantined, and by then they've already missed another four days of instruction . . . as the teacher, feeling like it still comes back to me because it's my class that they're missing . . . no one's asking or taking into account all the other elements that are part of it, or at least it didn't seem that way from an administrator perspective coming down to the teachers, so it was frustrating. And you know, I am the type where I shut down, and I get really quiet. And so, even having my principal at the time, and some of our APs like just kind of checking with me and be like, hey? We notice there's been a shift in your entire energy element like, are you okay, and what's going on? And me really trying to control my frustration and trying to diplomatically get to the core of, here's what's driving the way I'm feeling without letting the frustration boil over and overshadow the moment and the opportunity (David Johnson).

For Dr. Johnson, frustration would have taken away the opportunity for him to reflect and work towards solutions for the benefit of his students. Diplomacy was the path he identified to student success, but in order to take that path, he had to curtail his frustration with a mask of quiet and calm. In Dr. Johnson's case, his superiors knew him well enough to recognize his tendency to become quiet when he experiences frustration, so his surface acting served to solicit the desired response from his administrators: They addressed his behavior because they noticed it had changed profoundly. For Elsa Harris, she was the supervisor who had to manage the emotions within the science department. During COVID, individual members of her department responded differently to pandemic safety protocols; namely, some did not meet safety expectations, and some did not meet pedagogical expectations:

> We [the department] weren't all getting along. Some people wanted to be very safe. Some people didn't want to be very safe, so there were definitely times where, as [department] coordinator, I have to hold that in together and be professional. So while I have one person who's still doing labs and letting people sit together, even though it's against COVID protocols . . . but then you have the other side, you have people who are just doing book work . . . there are times when I was just very frustrated to be in charge. (Elsa Harris)

Ms. Harris found herself needing to mask her frustration in order to maintain her professionalism, even though the circumstances in her department that affected both student safety and student learning outcomes deeply bothered her.

All participants engaged in some instance of surface acting, albeit with different goals in mind: positivity for students, professionalism, and diplomacy. Participants experienced various levels of success with the masking of genuine emotions, but generally identified exhaustion and frustration with the underlying situations that caused the genuine emotions in the first place. The

next section reveals participants' experiences with emotional deviance, in which the mask of surface acting is removed.

Emotional Deviance

The third emotional labor strategy upon which participants reflected was emotional deviance. Emotional deviance is the expression of genuine emotion in spite of the emotion expected to be displayed in one's professional context (Çukur, 2009). The individual deviates from the expected emotional performance of their profession. In the case of this study, participants identified instances in which they deviated from the ways in which teachers were expected to emote in a professional context. Participants' expressions of emotional deviance happened most frequently in two contexts: with administrators and coworkers, and with students. When communicating with students, participants identified both positive and negative outcomes of emotional deviance; however, when interacting with fellow adults—administrators and coworkers—participants described their experiences with emotional deviance as largely negative.

Expression of Emotions to Administrators and Coworkers

During the pandemic, all participants experienced logistical stressors that affected the day-to-day operations of their school sites, as well as their own teaching practices. Sarah Anderson felt so angry during a staff meeting that they "went off" on their administrators:

> We had an emergency meeting at the end of our first day of school fall 2020 and that was when we had originally had the plan to only have you know synchronous learning and our director [said] we're going to meet all seven periods on zoom and nobody was saying anything and I've always in meetings, been the person to [say] what about this, or you know, to call stuff out and not necessarily in an abrasive way, but I was pissed and everyone else was so pissed and I'm not good at hiding my emotions on my face. And I spoke out, and I was like, this was not what was communicated to us before, I have it in emails and a slide deck whatever. And the director, who, in retrospect, I thought she was

> gaslighting us, I think she just had no clue, was like, this has always been the plan like this is always what it's been, and I was just going off and was like, no, it is not and you know it. Eventually, I had to just back off because it wasn't going anywhere and nothing's going to change but . . . I was just so mad because I felt like they were not prioritizing students because it's always about, Oh, the parents are clients, you know, being a private school . . . anytime at school, that I snapped has always been in service of advocating for students. (Sarah Anderson)

Mx. Anderson perceived that their administrator was being dishonest about the nature of operational changes to the school's schedule. By describing their behavior as "going off," and directly challenging their supervisor's version of events in public, Mx. Anderson deviated from the professionalism identified in the surface acting section as an expected quality in teacher emotions. Anna Pereira engaged in a similar outburst, which was only possible because of a positive relationship with the supervisor in question:

> I would just get so angry, in a meeting with my program manager, or even with my supervising teacher, I would just say, this is so fucked up, I cannot do this anymore, fuck this, fuck these people, basically I'm out, I can't watch this happen anymore. I would say stuff like that, honestly. Luckily, I had a really good relationship with those two people. I would never say that to my principal . . . [it felt] a little validating because at least they knew, I'm not ok with this. But I didn't solve the problem. . . . I can vent 'til the fricking cows come home, but it doesn't change anything. (Anna Pereira)

Ms. Pereira's emotional deviance resulted in her feeling validated, but not assuaged. She differentiated in her retelling between feeling acknowledged and feeling like the problem had been addressed and solved in a satisfactory manner. While she appreciated the validation, the underlying problem that caused her emotional deviance in the first place was never solved. Ryan Martin shared this same experience of mixed results of emotional deviance when he expressed dire reservations over being required to support students in American Sign Language (ASL) instruction:

> ASL is not just something where I can watch the video of them signing and sign-off and

> give them a score based on their efforts involved. This is something where we're doing a real disservice to the hearing-impaired community. . . . I got in a protracted argument with my administration about it, because obviously it was not an ideal situation for them. They didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to do. I didn't feel comfortable doing it yet. The students still needed help, and I took some heat for it. I think I ticked off a few members of the administration, but I felt that there came a point where it was inappropriate. It was wrong. I felt morally wrong about it, and I expressed my frustration, maybe a little more forcefully than I should have at times that this was doing a disservice to the hearing impaired community, and I just felt very wrong. . . . I felt a sense of hopelessness and sort of being at the mercy of the context that we were all in, that this pandemic was forcing the administrators to do things that they weren't comfortable with, and then just went right down on the food chain to me, and we were all sort of victims of this and that was a sense of hopeless frustration about it. (Ryan Martin)

During the pandemic, Mr. Martin's administration required him to support students in ASL, despite the fact that he had no prior knowledge of the language. He felt moral justification for bringing his concerns to the attention of his superiors but accompanying that strong sense of moral correctness was a profound frustration with the pandemic context that allowed for this situation to occur. Mr. Martin's expression of frustration over what he felt to be morally wrong constituted emotional deviance from expected emotions and behaviors of teachers—namely, flexibility and self-sacrifice—but the argument with his administration did not result in the desired outcome. His emotional deviance still resulted in "hopeless frustration." In a prior section, Elsa Harris described engaging in surface acting to maintain a facade of professionalism when her coworkers refused to follow pandemic protocols. However, she did not always act contrary to her genuine feelings:

> There was a time, too, when we [district and school leadership] decided to be unmasked—we were definitely divided as a staff. . . . There were some coworkers of mine who I'm friendly with, who are vehemently anti-mask and I think the expectation is you're going to be professional with them and try to be cordial with the and have a logical conversation with them. And I would say that there was definitely this time where we just had to debate it, and we would argue, and it would never be in front of students, and it wouldn't even be that bad but it wouldn't stay as professional. It would become a little more heated. I felt a lot of anger and frustration at these people. . . . I almost felt

> betrayed because, as a science person, I felt betrayed because they were trying to throw bad science at me. (Elsa Harris)

Ms. Harris felt anger and frustration because of the arguments her colleagues used in opposition to the practice of masking. Even though Ms. Harris' profession as a teacher held an expectation that she would be calm and collegial in moments of frustration, her strong feelings of anger caused her to deviate from that expectation. This deviation did not, however, result in tangible solutions to the underlying problem causing her frustration.

Expression of Emotions to Students: Welcomed Authenticity

In expressing genuine emotions not expected in the teaching persona to fellow adults, participants did not experience much tangible success or positive emotional payoff. However, participants enjoyed more positive results when expressing genuine emotions to students, even if students did not expect that behavior from their teachers. Shannon Scott highlighted the importance of students seeing teachers as well-rounded human beings, counter to their expectations:

> I think [it is] really important for students to see that teachers are human with emotions, and that we have things that affect us outside of the classroom. . . . I remember we were still remote when the storming of the capitol happened, and that was kind of a challenging day, because students may not be super invested in politics, but they saw it happening like they were on social media, and they knew it was a big deal, and they felt unsettled. And I was, too, and I think I was more in shock, but not really sure how to feel. But it was kind of like, there's this big thing that we can't ignore, so let's just share [what] we're feeling. I'm kind of giving the students and even myself that space to acknowledge that there are things happening outside of our math class that affect us. And so how do we move on from that? How do we go from here? (Shannon Scott)

Ms. Scott's students may have expected her to be solely focused on the content of the math class, but she disrupted that expectation by discussing the January 6th, 2021 storming of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. when it occurred during her school's distance learning period.

She reacted to students feeling unsettled by current events with genuine emotions of shock and her own unsettlement. David Johnson engaged in similar transparency with his students upon returning to in-person instruction in 2021:

> When we first came back from the pandemic in person, [we] just cried, which was a very new kind of experience to have with my Advisory. Because of all the loss, like a lot of my advisory students lost family members . . . some of them lost a parent during the pandemic. Some of my undocumented advisory students were concerned because they were like, I don't know if I should even apply to college at this point because my family's been radically impacted. . . . I think it was one of the few times, especially upon our initial return to campus, that we all just kind of had a moment where we're crying for all the things for the future, for getting through and making it back physically in Person. . . . I think it's something I'll never forget, that level of genuine transparency. I think on paper something that is encouraged, but I think in particular, during the pandemic, the messaging that we were given as teachers was, return to normal. There was this very strong message of . . . we're just going to ignore all the trauma and everything else that's happened in an effort to give them what it is that we feel they needed, which is their "normal" school experience. (David Johnson)

Dr. Johnson felt that the expectation for him was to help students return to a normal school experience and recover from any trauma or distress amassed during the pandemic as quickly as possible; however, and contrary to that expectation, he held space for both he and his students to mourn and celebrate together in person. Similar to Ms. Scott, he expressed genuine emotions even though it was not expected of him as a teacher at that moment. The pandemic affected Iris Lee's in-person dance show, the culmination of her class's work throughout the semester. She described her students' reaction to her genuine expression of disappointment:

> They appreciated that I was upset. I almost cried at one point when I was talking to them. I'm like, you know what guys, I know we've worked so hard, I have really bad news . . . I kind of teared up, and I think that they appreciated that I was showing that I cared so much about something that they had cared so much for. I think they would have been more angry if they had seen me kind of do the filters like everything's going to be okay we're going to have a great show, because then they would have felt like I wasn't as much into the project as they had been. (Iris Lee)

Mrs. Lee's students appreciated her emotional deviance, even though it differed from not only what was expected of her as a teacher—flexibility—but also her own generally positive and upbeat personality. In fact, Mrs. Lee hypothesized that if she had engaged in surface acting as opposed to emotional deviance, her students would have doubted her own commitment to their hard work.

Ms. Scott, Dr. Johnson, and Mrs. Lee experienced positive results when they engaged in emotional deviance in the presence of their students. Their experiences resulted in stronger teacher-student bonds and generally positive emotions towards their choices in how to emote in a given moment. However, not all participants felt positive towards their experiences with emotional deviance. Both Katherine Nowak and Nicholas Lee struggled with moments in which their emotions did not align with their professional expectations as teachers. Ms. Nowak described the moments after reacting negatively to a student's behavior in class:

> It took me a minute to calm down, and then I went over, and I was like, hey, I just have to say I am so sorry. I hate yelling. I shouldn't have yelled at you. . . . That's definitely a situation where, like I definitely don't think I was expressing what was expected of me, and it's a little bit embarrassing to share. But I think . . . that's something that I had to learn, but I do find that the student behaviors after the pandemic, or even during the pandemic, were way worse than before. So I do find it's definitely harder [to put on the] mask and to really be like, okay, we're going to be understanding. And we're going to be happy and they're acting out because they're going through something, and it's not me. (Katherine Nowak)

Ms. Nowak recognized what was expected of her as a teacher—to be patient and understanding even in the face of frustrating student behaviors—and felt guilty for deviating from that expectation and expressing her genuine frustration to the misbehaving student. But she also pointed out an increase in student misbehavior that is contrary to her own expectations of

students as a teacher. Similarly, Nicholas Lee remembered a student acting uncharacteristically upon the return to in-person instruction:

> And I had one student who just kept asking the same like inane, stupid off topic questions . . . I snapped. [There] was kind of an odd new look like a wounded puppy dog as he left the classroom. And I felt horrible. And I went and talked to three other teachers who had him and they're like, I felt the exact same way. I'm like, okay, but I want to be better. So that was kind of the one difference in managing a full space with a million students who ask stupid questions that you can't get away from. I become callous to that [while teaching online]. And then in person, I think that it's kind of a weird, paradoxical thing, because . . . students this year were, I mean, they are two years developmentally behind. Yeah, they're juniors and they act like freshmen. And so I think that I would never have had a student at that point in the semester in my space, who still had that kind of like, sophomore IQ. . . . And so I think COVID invented that as a problem just because the kids are now developmentally behind in school. (Nicholas Lee)

Mr. Lee's angry response to the student did not align with the expectation of him as a teacher, and he felt substantial remorse in lashing out in this way towards that student. However, he also reflected on how the pandemic affected his ability to meet that expectation: The medium in which he was teaching, either virtual or in-person, affected his given interactions with student behaviors that might have triggered emotional responses, and students' experiences during the pandemic resulted in drastic developmental lags in maturity and self-restraint. Like Ms. Nowak, Mr. Lee did not relish in his emotional deviance in the case of this student, but his similar observations about student behavior, from the other side of the country, do suggest a possible pattern that has affected teachers' management of their emotions in the face of student misbehavior.

Deep Acting

The fourth and final emotional labor strategy upon which participants reflected was deep acting. Unlike surface acting, in which the individual suppresses genuine emotions on a surface level in favor of professionally expected affect, deep acting involves an active commitment to

the expected affect: the individual puts in concerted effort to actually feel the emotion needed to display, resulting, ideally, in genuine feeling of that required emotion. In discussing their experiences with deep acting, participants engaged in deep acting for the sake of their students, to maximize the students' experience in school and in each participants' individual classroom.

For the Sake of Student Wellbeing

Nicholas Lee found deep acting easier with his students than with his colleagues:

> Trying to act happy and trying to make myself feel happy was just a major struggle. [With] students, that comes more naturally. I really, really like kids. And I find kids really beautiful and wonderful and fulfilling in ways that I don't feel the same mercy towards adults. So it becomes harder to make myself feel happier when they [adults] should know better. You're a 35-year-old dude. Suck it up? I don't know. (Nicholas Lee)

Mr. Lee's positive feelings towards students resulted in his affording them more mercy and grace during the pandemic. Being in the presence of students made him feel happier, which made deep acting easier: Even though he did not genuinely feel happy, he put effort towards feeling that emotion for the sake of his students because he felt they deserved it in a way his colleagues did not. While Mr. Lee focused on happiness as the target emotion, Ryan Martin identified enthusiasm as the emotion he put effort into genuinely feeling:

> I put serious effort into trying to be enthusiastic during the time both when we were remote learning and when we were in person, but socially distanced in the school. It was exceedingly challenging because there was no energy from the students to feed off. If they weren't interacting as much, they weren't answering questions. . . . I did not feel enthusiastic at all. I dreaded it some days. It was very, very, very tough, because I felt it made me . . . like the kind of teacher I didn't want to be, the type of teacher that stood in the front of the room and talked at the kids . . . but I tried hard to fake it. I tried really hard to be enthusiastic, anyway, to find something that made me enjoy what I was doing. It was tough, but I put real effort into it, and sometimes it worked. (Ryan Martin)

The impetus for Mr. Martin's deep acting was students' disengagement from the class. Even though he did not necessarily feel like his enthusiasm consistently worked in improving

students' experiences, it was a motivation to enhance students' interactions and sense of community in his classroom that motivated him to engage in deep acting. It is worth noting that the deep acting served another purpose: In engaging students, he enjoyed his teaching practice more. His enthusiasm made him rediscover a joy in his work that had been stifled during in-person learning with social distancing restrictions. Elsa Harris also put effort into feeling happy after growing tired of faking the emotion in a manner that made her teaching practice no longer enjoyable:

> There was definitely a time when I didn't want to fake the happiness anymore. I wanted to try to really work at that and really work at relationships. So I think probably in the winter of the hybrid year, I really had to work at the trying to make the relationship[s], so I could feel the happiness of teaching, because I was definitely faking it for a while, putting on that mask, and at some point, it was like, ok, there's nothing here. It's just there's no spark in teaching in this model. So I had to try, and I would do that with having these extra Zooms, or just trying to find connections with the students any time I couldn't in the classroom. It wasn't easy, and I don't know if it always worked, but there was just that lull and I just had to get over [it], try to just get out of the funk of hating teaching for a little while. (Elsa Harris)

Ms. Harris stopped faking happiness in favor of building genuine relationships with her students because she felt disillusionment similar to that which Mr. Martin felt. Deep acting allowed both participants to rediscover joy in their crafts.

Christina Jones also put effort into feeling enthusiastic to improve her students' learning experience. She described:

> I wanted so badly to feel like, how do I get myself into an excited place for my kids? When it came to adults, I was like, I'm going to sit in this PD [Professional Development] and not be happy about it, I don't give a shit, but kids know everything, they know how you're feeling, they are so intuitive. . . . I think [I made] efforts to make myself feel better because I knew that it would help to make them feel better and more comfortable. (Christina Jones)

Mrs. Jones chose deep acting in order to make her students feel more comfortable and at ease in her classroom. Like Mrs. Lee, she surmised that her students would be observant enough to identify surface acting out in the open, so instead chose to put effort into feeling excited to make her students excited. While the aforementioned participants put effort towards feeling happiness, enthusiasm, and excitement as to see these emotions reflected in their students, David Johnson identified feelings of safety for students as his motivator for engaging in deep acting:

> The underlying kind of driving force was for the sake of students feeling as if this space being back on campus was safe. I'm going to do the things that my school administrators are calling for me to do in the sense of turning a blind eye to the trauma that is directly, clearly, directly impacting my students on a day-to-day basis as they transition on campus. So more so, we're going to get back to lesson planning, and we're going to get back to making these lessons as meaningful as we can be now that students are back in person and on campus. Let that be your focus, was the messaging coming back from the administrators, and really wanting to give it kind of the old college try despite my own inner convictions at the time. But initially, feeling like, I want to do this, because, you know, my administrators are handing this down, and I'm trying to do this because the messaging is, it's going to help the students. (David Johnson)

Dr. Johnson initially did not want to engage in deep acting because of his own misgivings about returning to the scheduled programming of a normal academic year. However, in wanting to create a sense of safety for students at school that he felt had not been present during the pandemic, he decided to try to feel a sense of normalcy.

Research Question 3: How Have Pandemic-Related Stressors Affected Teachers' Job Satisfaction and Feelings of Burnout?

Burnout

Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers identifies three elements of burnout: emotional exhaustion; depersonalization; and reduced accomplishment/efficacy. I categorized participant job dissatisfaction into these three elements and used values coding to

identify commonalities in participants' experiences within these categories. I included the commonalities as themes under each burnout element.

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion involves profound feelings of depletion and overextension in one's professional sphere. Symptoms of emotional exhaustion, such as anxiety and impaired concentration and attention, often accompany symptoms of physical exhaustion, such as chronic fatigue and insomnia (Dubois & Mistretta, 2020; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Participants described instances of feeling emotionally exhausted, most commonly due to their added professional responsibilities during the pandemic, including the perceived weight of the relationships they shared with their students.

Added Pandemic-Related Responsibilities

All participants described increased responsibilities as a pandemic-related stressor over the course of their interview, but many participants revisited the topic later in the interview protocol when I asked about their feelings of job satisfaction, or lack thereof, and what they wished that non-teachers knew about the experience of teaching during the pandemic. Iris Lee had felt the pressure of increased responsibilities without extra compensation:

> This is the first year that I had not been excited to go back to teaching, because I have so much, they have put on my plate, and I am so anxious about it. I mean right now I'm just thinking about it and I, I have my varsity, my junior varsity, my advanced dance class, these are all full classes, advanced dance classes; my two electives but they're only one semester; the academy is one of my two electives, I'm a moderator for the whole freshman class and a mentor for a part of the senior class. I am in charge of the cheerleading team; I am the choreographer for the musical and there's one more thing that I'm doing I can't remember what it is. But there's one more thing I'm doing too. With just the regular rate, I'm not getting extra money for doing all this extra work and a lot of it is new work, so it's really daunting to me the pressure that they've put on me, so this is the first time, where I'm like I don't know if I'll be at this school, as long as I wanted to. The pay is great, and the people are great, and the students are great, but they

> take advantage of my time in such a way that it's too overwhelming and I don't know how I'm going to figure this out. (Iris Lee)

The increased responsibilities have resulted not only in emotional exhaustion, but also in discouragement from returning to her current teaching position. Katherine Nowak was also considering leaving her current position due to the increased professional demands:

> If teaching was just teaching, I would teach forever. I love teaching to the bottom of my heart. My friends, when we first graduated college, were all jealous because, even though they had careers that made a lot more money and got them free cars and free computers and all this stuff, they had to put up with stuff at work, and I had to put up with stuff at work, too. But they're like, at least you love what you do, and that's something that I've always held with me is, the day that I don't love teaching is the day that I'm leaving, and even though I've not fallen out of love with teaching yet, I do see a lot of flaws in our system. And so actually, um, this year I am applying to a PhD Program. (Katherine Nowak)

Ms. Nowak recognized that teaching is not the only professional expectation in her current place of employment: The role of teacher has expanded past traditional instructional models. Ashley Brown mentioned these increased responsibilities as well in her response:

> I felt like there were, every single year, more responsibilities that were put into the job and more expectations, when I started teaching. It was literally just teaching like teaching kids science and that was my responsibility. And then, as we went on, it was like, Okay, you also need to mentor these students in this way, there are these other things that you need to teach that are not science, you also need to teach math, you also need to teach English and writing and reading. And you need to be a therapist and a counselor and now you need to teach them time management skills like separately outside of your curriculum. You need to teach them social emotional skills and all of these things just kept being added to the point where it felt like my curriculum of science was no longer the focus. And so, all of these extra things, I am just not good at. I am not good at teaching social emotional learning because I barely have a handle on that myself. I can't, you know, I struggle managing my own emotions, how can I teach somebody else to manage their [emotions] when the training that we've received on it is small. (Ashley Brown)

Ms. Brown struggled teaching social emotional learning skills to promote students' mental health and wellness because of inadequate training combined with her lack of confidence

in managing her own emotions. Though additional responsibilities—such as teaching reading and writing—within her science curriculum might have made their appearance before the pandemic began, she identified the COVID-19 pandemic as the catalyst for schools expecting teachers to seamlessly integrate social emotional instruction into their curricula. David Johnson summarized the scope of the increase in teacher responsibilities while echoing Ms. Brown's observation about lack of training and pedagogical support:

> I also think that the demands of teachers professionally far outpace the support that teachers in general receive. And I think, as a result, one of the things that we saw the pandemic do was cause a lot of teachers to kind of throw their hands up and really push them over the limit and the line to say, I can't do this anymore. . . . The role of being a teacher just continues to expand. So we are held as being these instructional leaders within our classroom for our students, but understanding that as teachers, we are mentors, we're counselors. We're, you know, mental health therapists without any of that necessary training or relationship coaches. We're all the things and understanding that I, as a result of the pandemic for me, I understood the role that teachers had, and really a greater influence that teachers had in helping students on a day-to-day basis. Because we, as teachers, are one of the constant things that students see. And for me, even thinking about seniors who graduated, who still reach out to me to this day because of those relationships, and seeing how that shift happened in large part after students came back from being away through distance learning and coming back on campus, going into them graduating. (David Johnson)

All the aforementioned participants identified increased instruction in social emotional strategies and mental health as added professional responsibilities that contributed to feelings of emotional overextension. While their responses imply relationships with students, other participants described explicit changes in the nature of their relationships with their students during the pandemic that caused emotional exhaustion.

Relationships: Labor of Love

Although participants identified relationships with students as one of the sources of their overall job satisfaction, the increased intensity and stakes of these relationships during the

pandemic led some teachers to experience emotional exhaustion. Sarah Anderson described how their day-to-day interactions with students, especially marginalized students, bled into their home life:

> But even with my students, I was just burnt out emotionally. I was a husk because they were constantly, you know, dumping on me their trauma, their concerns, no matter how big or small and I'm a very empathetic person so, you know I didn't want to tell them like I don't have room for this. And, you know, that I'd come home to my husband and my daughter, and eventually my baby and barely have emotional energy for them. I know part of that's on me, I guess, for not setting boundaries, but you know there are a lot of queer and trans kids who are telling me shit they can't tell other people and I felt an obligation and a moral responsibility to be there for them. (Sarah Anderson)

When describing, in response to an earlier question, how teachers are expected to emote, Mx. Anderson responded that teachers are expected to be empathetic and adopt students' problems as their own. However, in their description of her emotional exhaustion, they blamed themself for the effect their empathy had on their relationships with their family. They recognized that queer students particularly relied on them as a source of support, but that their perceived lack of boundaries caused this facet of their burnout. In this example, what is perceived as necessary in terms of teachers' emotions and personal engagement with students directly causes emotional exhaustion. The worry that Mx. Anderson felt for their queer students during the pandemic is similar to what Ryan Martin felt for his own students, particularly in what seemed like continuous transition and uncertainty:

> It wasn't necessarily solely that our routines were disrupted, and that our methods of teaching were disrupted, and that our day-to-day operations were, you know, that everything was disrupted in terms of functional things. We were engaged with kids on a human level that we've never at least in my profession, my experience, I've never experienced before. I've never worried so much that every day I saw a kid would be the last day I'd see them, either because of something that would happen at home, or that they [would] get ill. . . . These are children, and you can't not see them as children, just as human beings, children [that are] vulnerable, frightened. You can't not see that every day, and to feel that if you're emotionally open at all as a teacher, you felt it, and it was a

> heavy burden that I don't think non-teachers understand, not because they're not empathetic, but because they've never been in that situation unless you've worked with large groups of kids who look to you as a role model, as a surrogate parent, in some cases as a mentor. For some of them, you are one of the strongest emotional connections they'll have throughout their whole year, and maybe beyond that, that's a serious responsibility, and it implies a very deep and complex connection, and only when there was this sort of mortal threat and this anxiety and confusion that descended upon all of us, did that human connection really come into focus. I'd want them [non-teachers] to know that many teachers, including me, lost students, literally lost them. They lost their lives. Whether it was the pandemic, whether it was suicide, whether it was something else. And to understand that the emotional toll that that takes, it's one of those things you can't even explain. (Ryan Martin)

During the pandemic, Mr. Martin lost two students to suicide, and though each of those incidents is tragic in and of itself, the increased empathy he describes seemed to heighten his reaction to these losses, and intensify, in turn, the concern he felt for his remaining students. Mr. Martin described his responsibilities as a teacher increasing: As a teacher, he is a self-identified role model, surrogate parent, and mentor. The complexity and interconnectedness of these roles caused what Mr. Martin described as an emotional toll, in other words, emotional exhaustion. Margaret Fuentes recognized that her profession always expected her to emotionally support her students, but that the pandemic increased the amount of students who needed her support:

> It was definitely last year [2021-2022], really highlighting the kind of emotional strain, not only of kind of going back into that role of an emotionally supportive adult with working with children, [but also] now they all have way more emotional issues than they did before, and so it just increases the stress of people who support, right? (Margaret Fuentes)

Mrs. Fuentes described the sheer amount of student social emotional concerns she needed to address and how that amount expanded during the pandemic, but Lilian Clark described a change in her own behavior as a reaction to this increase in awareness of student social emotional struggle:

> I feel like I was already dialed into, you know, their mental health struggles like one of my advisees last year, you know, told me that she had tried to commit suicide a couple of years ago, you know, before all of the pandemic stuff. And so I just feel like I've always known that. But certainly the number of kids that I'm now aware of that, are not only struggling, but voicing their struggles and talking about it. You know it. It's compounded, so of course there are more students that you're worried about than before. There's more like, I said a little bit ago, when I was like, I've tried to kind of hold the line with what I wanted to teach, but I just felt like I was constantly like sending out my tentacles. What's going on in my classroom? And how are we doing? And do I need to kind of rethink what we're doing today? Because you never really knew what you were walking into, I guess. (Lilian Clark)

Mrs. Clark adapted her personal pedagogy to reflect heightened awareness and concern in response to increased instances of student mental health struggle. She described increasing the amount that she worried and increasing the sense of uncertainty in the day-to-day operations of her classroom. Both of these phenomena contribute to emotional overextension, even if teachers like Mrs. Clark saw them as necessary practices.

Depersonalization

Depersonalization is another symptom of burnout, one that serves as a coping mechanism for those feeling increased cynicism and detachment in their professional lives. Depersonalization can result in loss of enjoyment in one's work, as well as pessimism and self-isolation from occupationally-related activities and events (Dubois & Mistretta, 2020). The three participants in this study who taught in southern states, namely, Texas and Tennessee, described instances involving political conflicts that contributed to their feelings of depersonalization in their professions. Though not directly related to the COVID-19 virus, there did exist a correlation between increasingly partisan political tensions and the pandemic. The pandemic, particularly the science of epidemiology and the development of the COVID-19 vaccine, became a political lightning rod in the 2020 presidential election between Donald Trump and Joseph Biden. Before

losing the election that would have afforded him a second term, President Trump's politicization of the virus, namely his denial that the virus existed, or was serious, and his insistence that the vaccine could not be trusted, heightened tensions that months of lockdowns and uncertainty had already sowed.

Politics

Sarah Anderson struggled with their school's politically motivated guidelines for what they could or could not teach in their humanities classroom:

> It's just become ridiculous, I mean the expectations around dodging anything that can be conceived as political and, not teaching fucking facts and things like that in history. Or in English, you know, having to be so careful about our curriculum and what books we choose and just the general political tenor that's going on right now, you know, especially in Texas. I was in meetings where I was almost having to disassociate and not care and be like, I'm not coming back next year, I don't care, I don't care because I would have been saying some shit otherwise. I'm just having to totally detach myself and I started doing that, out of survival. (Sarah Anderson)

Mx. Anderson described the need to adopt an attitude of depersonalization in order to regulate their frustrations about their schools, and their state's, political stances on curriculum. Depersonalization was a coping mechanism until they could leave the profession, which they did at the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. In Tennessee, Andrew and Lilian Clark described having to choose their battles in order to remain in the teaching profession. Mr. Clark described an instance in which Mrs. Clark questioned his showing photographs of Greek art in his history class:

> It hit me. It's starting to hit me personally. . . . "You showed Greek art?" and I'm like, "Of course I showed Greek art. You have to talk about Greek art," and [Lilian's] like, "They're nude." For the first time in my teaching career, I had to question whether I should show the Statue of David. And I'm like, damn, that is just, it's sad . . . and there's a question, she's like, "Do you really want to show this?" Because all it takes is one kid who knows the Dean of Faculty or knows the Head of the Trustee, and all of a sudden, I'm called to carpet. It's just weird. It's just weird. How can history that's already, you

> know, I'm not talking about the Civil Rights Movement, or Malcolm X, or Rodney King or . . . I'm talking about Florence, Italy, Florence! So what the hell? (Andrew Clark)

Mr. Clark expressed frustration and confusion about heightened sensitivities towards what could be interpreted as inappropriate imagery. He continued to express pessimism towards the changes he perceived in what is expected from his curriculum and from his profession as a teacher:

> I don't know if I can [deal] with it because the changes are so fast, but also with the way this is moving and moving, I just don't think I want to be fighting. I mean, I don't want to fight anymore. I'm just done fighting for pronouns with people. . . . I'm just not fighting, so I feel really good about my teaching. I don't feel very good about my school, but I think I'm going to probably get out when I can. . . . The question of the stressor is that kind of that quiet retirement kind of idea of the quiet quitting [that] is going on, and I would say a level of COVID that has hit me, is, I was always up for the fight, and because of COVID and Trump I'm not. I'm not for the war. I'm quietly fighting like I have my water bottle, and then my safe kids and I do this. I'm helping the Club, the Writing Club, which is really just the, "I'm sensitive, I'm going to write it down" Club, and I'm like, that's for everything. Just COVID made everything go to me, and I'm just not going to do anything else. (Andrew Clark)

Mr. Clark described feelings of depersonalization: He did not feel the desire to combat controversial topic—at least not publicly or at the institutional level within his school—but he continued to provide access to a supportive and inclusive environment for students who need it. Serving in this capacity to aid vulnerable or marginalized students is an additional burden, however, and contributed to Mr. Clark's overall sense of emotional exhaustion. Both depersonalization and emotional exhaustion contribute to his desire to leave the profession as soon as the opportunity arises.

Mrs. Clark did not express the same level of depersonalization as did her husband. What helped Mrs. Clark manage the same political tensions at her school was putting into perspective how her students also had to navigate the culture wars:

> I still like my profession. I totally see that if I have been at a different school, or really a public school, I'd be gone, probably, but like as much as there are things at [my school] that I disagree with sort of in terms of like the politics there basically ever since Trump was elected. . . . The crazies have come out of the woodwork. It's like they had to be quiet during the Obama years, and now they don't feel like they need to quiet at all . . . I feel like one of the things that people haven't realized is that obviously teachers have had to negotiate talking to parents who do or do not agree with what the school is doing. But the kids are just like that would have been an everyday struggle to have to deal with it at school and come home and hear about it from the parents (Lilian Clark).

Mrs. Clark chose to focus on how political division might affect her students. From her perspective, it was immensely difficult for students to face political controversy surrounding curriculum and pandemic-related safety measures at school from their peers, and then have to go home and also interact with discontent from their parents and families. Mrs. Clark acknowledged teachers' increased burden in having to communicate with parents disgruntled for various reasons during the pandemic, but her focus remained on how this phenomenon affected students. Faced with the same professional conditions, both Mr. and Mrs. Clark experienced depersonalization, but in different ways: Mr. Clark chose to remove himself from the stressor as much as was possible while still supporting students implicitly, while Mrs. Clark chose to focus on student outcomes and concerns, compartmentalizing and prioritizing them over her own labor in navigating the same stressors as her husband and as her students. What is important to note in reviewing the Clarks' and Mx. Anderson's accounts is that depersonalization does not always present identically between individuals, but the feeling at its core is one of avoidance for the sake of emotional survival.

Reduced Accomplishment/Efficacy

A sense of inefficacy and reduced sense of accomplishment is the final symptom of burnout addressed in Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers. It involves

an individual's failure or struggle to see the connection between their labor and the positive or productive results of said labor (Dubois & Mistretta, 2020).

Villainization of Teaching Profession

When I asked participants what they wanted non-teachers to understand about what it was like for educators to teach during the pandemic, the most common response highlighted was what participants perceived to be the widespread villainization of both teachers and the teaching profession. Participants described this rhetorical pattern as demoralizing and directly related to feelings of reduced accomplishment and efficacy. According to participants, rhetoric surrounding the teaching profession changed dramatically during the pandemic. Elizabeth Moore recalled:

> During the [beginning of the] pandemic, teachers felt more appreciated, maybe, by the public than they typically do. And then very quickly, that has changed back to parents thinking that they know what's best for their students and policing curriculum, and what can and cannot be taught in classrooms, and I think that it's important to remember that when people were kind of stuck, having to like, manage the schoolwork of their children, or like, be kind of more involved in that process when their students couldn't go to school every day, a lot of them were pretty miserable and they actually didn't really know what maybe their students needed, or the things that best supported them. . . . People were like Oh, my God, teachers, we love them! And now they're like, Oh, you actually have to submit entire curricul[a] before the school year starts when [we] have to approve them. (Elizabeth Moore)

In Ms. Moore's experience, parental supervision of teachers' pedagogy increased during the pandemic, even after a brief period of increased appreciation for the profession. Sarah Anderson and Christina Jones remembered a similar rhetorical shift towards the beginning of the pandemic in the spring of 2020:

> Teachers are really under attack, like at the beginning of COVID there was, you know, this rhetoric . . . about teachers as well as other essential workers at the beginning of the pandemic about how we're heroes and there was all this appreciation for us and blah blah blah, and it really seems like teachers have become vilified or like a lot has been put on to them over the course of the pandemic. (Sarah Anderson)

> The confusing rhetoric surrounding, teachers are heroes, and then it's like, teachers are lazy pieces of shit, when it suited the national conversation how it needed to be suited, and that pissed me off, and I was like I'm really over here working my ass off. And even from family members, they were like, oh you don't want to go back, like, what about the kids. I'm like, don't do that, excuse my language, but like, fuck off, like no I'm serving my kids the best I can. Do I like it? No, but do I want to go back when we have like no idea what this virus can or will do? Also no, so don't blame me. I think no one understands like my family members are very supportive of my profession, but in, you know this, people just don't get it if they are not in education . . . you don't understand, like the mental, emotional, physical stressors that come along with teaching initially, and then on top of that, with COVID and you have to compartmentalize your own processing of things in order to like show up for the students first. Right? It's like that part got me to where it's like you don't understand what it's like to be in education unless you're in it and, how the news and others like you know national, political whatever rhetoric was like painting it, it was just like, yay teachers and then it was like back to normal of like all right, teachers, like work yourselves to the bone and it does not surprise me why people are leaving the profession to be completely honest I've thought about leaving the profession because I'm so tired and burnt out. (Christina Jones)

Mx. Anderson and Ms. Jones did not feel validated in the hard work they put into their practices during the pandemic. Monica Perez experienced a similar tension when parents generalized their emotions based on experiences with one teacher:

> We're never good enough. We're never good enough, and it's really frustrating because my kids' teacher, the first year we had the pandemic, was truly terrible. And so parents see that. And they're like. Oh, these teachers are so awful! They're not doing anything. They're working one hour, and they're still getting paid. And then other teachers are like myself, and other teachers are doing so much. . . . We've gotten hate emails from parents saying that you're ruining my kids' childhood because you don't have snow days anymore. (Monica Perez)

Monica Perez described parents unleashing their frustrations regarding school operations on teachers, such as in the example of blaming teachers for schools no longer "canceling" school due to inclement weather in favor of holding virtual instructions on those days instead. The misconception that teachers were being paid to not work while being at home during the pandemic was common, as Monica Perez experienced it in Nevada and as Elsa Harris experienced the ramifications of the same rhetoric across the country in Massachusetts:

> I don't think people realize . . . one of the most frustrating things hearing throughout the pandemic was that teachers were just at home, and we weren't working, or that it was, you know, we got paid to just sit at home, especially for the first half of the year, but even during hybrid, they were like, Oh, you're just being paid to do nothing. Well, no, we had to recreate the wheel. So if you're not a teacher, you know, like we have to create those lessons every day. . . . I think people outside of the school will agree that you know it is really hard on kids, but at the same time, when you're working with them every single day. . . . The momentum has been really hard to maintain. (Elsa Harris)

Ms. Harris deduced that parents simply did not understand the pedagogical labor that went into transferring lessons from in-person to virtual during the distance learning period, and again upon the return to in-person instruction to accommodate safety guidelines. She described a dichotomy between what parents and the larger society of non-educators thought teachers were accomplishing during the distance learning period, versus what they actually needed to, and did, accomplish to maintain students' educational experience. David Johnson also highlighted the role of the transition between distance and in-person learning in feeding societal misconceptions about teachers' value:

> I think a lot of people identified that because students were staying at home, parents and guardians and family members realized and recognized a lot of the challenges that teachers had in dealing with and working with students because of the fact that those students were traditionally in classrooms throughout the day, instead of being at home. I also feel like that was quickly forgotten when schools opened back up, and that as teachers continue to progress through the different pipelines that they needed to, whether it be legislatively or through the districts, to get the additional resources or supports that they needed, they were kind of met with that traditional barrier of like one. We don't really think you need this? Or why are you asking for these additional supports, which was interesting to me. It was like you just praised us for being heroes, and you know, understanding how important and all the values and services that we offer for students because your students were at home. And now that your students are back in school, it's so quickly forgotten (David Johnson).

Dr. Johnson and Ms. Harris described feelings of frustration and confusion as they witnessed the stark shift in societal narratives surrounding teacher efficacy and value, but for Anna Pereira and Shannon Scott, the impact was more clearly connected to feelings of burnout:

> So many of us care so deeply for our students, and we want them to succeed so badly, and sometimes holding them accountable because we want them to succeed is unpopular. So yeah, it was. It was really stressful. It was really disheartening to be vilified throughout the whole process, because people were afraid to return to campus. I had coworkers that were pregnant and were afraid at that time. We didn't know how this impacted all kinds of different people, groups, and people were scared, and it was assumed that it was because we didn't want to do our jobs, and that was really disheartening. (Shannon Scott)

Ms. Scott described a strong feeling of inefficacy and reduced accomplishment when teachers felt a tension between prioritizing their own safety and the learning outcomes of their students. The unknown elements of the COVID-19 pandemic caused many teachers to feel fearful and, additionally, distressed over the misconceptions parents and community members held that clashed with teachers' genuine care for their students. Ms. Pereira, who, of all the study's participants, experienced the most acutely negative communications with parents, summarized succinctly her experience:

> I really wish people would understand the type of harassment, bullying, and abuse that teachers go through with parents. I cannot hammer that home enough, and I think it was really bad during the pandemic. (Anna Pereira)

Ms. Pereira chose to leave the teaching profession at the conclusion of the 2021-2022 academic year due to the abusive behavior she suffered from parents during the pandemic and what she felt was a disconnect between the work she put into supporting her students and the lack of adequate resources and innovations her students with severe special needs received in the public school context. Like Ms. Pereira and the other participants quoted in this section, a lack of tangible validation that the work she inputted into her students' success was, in fact, valued and appreciated, caused her to experience burnout that ended her teaching career.

Job Satisfaction

At the end of the interview protocol, I asked participants to reflect on their current feelings towards their careers as educators. The previous section of this chapter focused on themes of burnout and disengagement from the profession, but this section includes the positive reflections, in other words, the parts of teaching that participants still enjoy or value, even despite the added stressors of the pandemic. In Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers, the alternative consequence to burnout is job satisfaction, particularly teaching satisfaction, or the elements of teaching that educators find satisfying enough to remain in the profession.

Teaching Satisfaction: The Importance of Student-Teacher Relationships

When describing reasons why they chose to stay in the teaching profession despite acute and chronic challenges, participants overwhelmingly identified connection with students as the primary reason for their job satisfaction, or as an element of satisfaction albeit overshadowed by elements of dissatisfaction. Christina Jones made the transition from strictly classroom teaching to an administrative role that still allowed her to maintain a reduced teaching load, and in thinking about her future career in education, she highlighted her relationships with students as one of the elements of her practice that kept her in the classroom:

> Maybe I'll stay in this role for a while, maybe I will just, you know, go back to teaching as a classroom teacher and then I can always like transition back and forth, but I think after a lot of reflection, I was like what else would I rather be doing . . . collectively, I think the education system definitely needs to move in other directions, but I just think like directly being in community with people as opposed to, I even thought about going the PhD route for a while, but then I was like I don't want to be that removed from kids because I really like hanging out with teenagers all day. It's fun. (Christina Jones)

Iris Lee identified similar positive relational elements in her own teaching experience:

> I definitely love teaching. I feel like I really love teaching, I feel like it was what I was meant to do, and I want to do it for the rest of my life so I'm never going to leave teaching. . . . My other friends like oh I'm just I'm not in this I'm going to open a coffee shop or I'm going to get another degree and that really shocked me because I think that, overall, this is like the best profession, you could have. You get to bond with students, you get to teach them what you love. It's just like, it's just this incredible job you get these vacations, we get time with colleagues and just building that emotional connection with students. I don't have to, you know, convince you why teaching is the best profession, but it just is and I would never leave it. (Iris Lee)

Mrs. Lee highlighted the emotional connections she makes with students as a reason she wants to remain in the profession, but she also mentioned the act of teaching her passion to others, and the logistical benefits of time to connect and collaborate with colleagues and vacation time. Her husband, Nicholas Lee, also highlighted the interpersonal connections between students as a reason for his personal satisfaction within the profession, though it was temporarily affected by the pandemic:

> We lost that human connection during the pandemic, which made it really hard to come up with like, especially for English, like curriculum that stayed in touch and was like English, I think, as discipline is distinctly like human interpersonal thing and so that, that sucked. And the [handwritten] letters similarly were a way of like, it felt more real than, again, another digital flashing of a thing on the screen. That was one of the things that I felt I uniquely missed during the pandemic. (Nicholas Lee)

Mr. Lee mentioned handwritten letters from students that, for him, represented the human connections between him and his students during the pandemic period. The virtual, digital nature of the distance learning period negatively impacted those relationships he enjoyed, and continues to enjoy upon the return to in-person learning, about teaching. Elizabeth Moore had a similar, albeit digital, space for mementos of human connections with her students:

> I actually I have a folder in my phone that's like school things for when you're sad or something—I don't remember—but it's just screenshots from messages of appreciation from students or parents, or things that I can look through when I'm feeling like a bad teacher, and I'm feeling mentally and physically exhausted. (Elizabeth Moore)

The messages that Ms. Moore keeps are a tangible representation of her connections with students that allow her to persevere in her career, even despite profound challenges and subsequent mental and physical occupational exhaustion. Ashley Brown enjoyed how her content area itself supported her positive connections with students:

> I loved the job itself; I loved being in the classroom. I love even showing students things that they didn't know, which was so easy to do in a science class these kids would come in, you know, I would have students who didn't even know what a cell was and so every word out of my mouth would be some brand-new thing, and there were always students who were like super into it and with ask all these questions. And I've been doing it for so long that I would just know all of this stuff, and so they asked me something and I could just tell them right away and they'd be like, wow that's so cool! And I'm like, you're right, here's all of these other facts that are also cool and so I loved that part of it. I love science. I love sharing science with other students. And so that really drove me for a very long time. And I had such a passion for that that I could kind of overlook the parts of teaching that I did not enjoy. (Ashley Brown)

Ms. Brown made the decision to leave the teaching profession after the 2021-2022 academic year but recalled fondly how her subject matter invoked wonder in her students. Her students' natural curiosity made forming connections with them more organic and enjoyable, but those connections eventually could not adequately overshadow the elements of teaching that frustrated her. Sarah Anderson, who also left teaching after the 2021-2022 academic year, recognized that their discontent with the profession was multifaceted, but that the central pillar of their prior teaching satisfaction was connections with their students:

> I think the most important thing to understand is, you know, all of the little logistical things add up and it's, you know, death by 1000 paper cuts. It's like you have all of this new logistical and administrative burden and then the actual joy of the day-to-day of teaching is so diluted because of how we're now having to teach right like not getting that feedback from students, not getting to have those "aha!" moments, you know when we were having to socially distance, not getting to like kneel down next to them and, like do weird drawings, to help them understand a concept like actually just all of those things you know them being online and not being able to read or connect with them, the way that I would, if they were in person . . . that's what's hurt me the most is like, not being able to build those connections, the way that I did before. (Sarah Anderson)

Similarly to Ms. Brown, Mx. Anderson felt satisfaction in their teaching when they were able to connect with students, as the students connected with the content Mx. Anderson taught. During the pandemic, these connections frayed and eroded their professional satisfaction, along with the logistical burdens that took away from the time available to instruct students, to the point that they chose to not return to teaching in the fall of 2022. Ryan Martin communicated his intent to return indefinitely to teaching, but acknowledged a sense of community and connection with his colleagues that he believed would fundamentally change how he engaged in the profession moving forward:

> Teachers just went to insane lengths to try to make it work, and so I feel like [there's] a strong sense of solidarity, maybe more so than I ever did with my fellow educators. There's definitely a sense of having, you know, a sense of camaraderie, and having survived something professionally that was daunting. It's interesting, being sort of on the back end of the pandemic, but being sort of back to normal, it's cool. It feels almost like a privilege to be back, being able to do normal things. I mean it's a good feeling. . . . The last two years have been sobering, you know, between the student suicides and between all the illnesses and the stress and all the transitions and changes we went through. It's a sobering process, so I find it a little more difficult to, and maybe this will change over time. But it's like a post-traumatic response. Almost. Not that I experienced, you know, unusual trauma of any kind. I didn't, but a collective response to trauma, I guess, is what I would describe [in] you know, the teaching profession, and I think we felt in students as well. I do see myself continuing and teaching indefinitely. I feel it's definitely a sense of holy mackerel, you know. I made it through that. (Ryan Martin)

Mr. Martin's reflection highlights the power of community and relationships in maintaining and fostering job satisfaction within teaching. Despite facing myriad hardships over the course of the pandemic, Mr. Martin acknowledged a strong sense of accomplishment and efficacy even in simply returning to teaching in the post-pandemic era, or, in his words, as things begin to return to some semblance of normalcy even as the COVID-19 endemic persists. His perception of job satisfaction came from this sense of accomplishment, which manifested itself

in a shared bond, or connection, between him, his colleagues, and his students who all survived this tumultuous period in the history of American education.

Conclusion

This study sought to answer three questions:

1. What stressors—new or exacerbated—do teachers perceive in their profession during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' emotional labor strategies?
3. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' job satisfaction and feelings of burnout?

The first research question gathered anecdotal data on what stressors high school teachers faced during the pandemic. Using The Danielson Group's Framework (2019) to help participants pinpoint what exactly constitutes their professional responsibilities and Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers to sort their responses, the findings suggest a wide range of disruptions to teachers' preexisting professional responsibilities and additions to what has been considered to constitute a teacher's typical workload. The nature of these disruptions and additions did not vary based on type of school environment nor years of experience teaching. Though some stressors, such as standardized testing requirements, varied between participants, three categories of stressors held consistent across teaching contexts: increased logistical responsibility without correlating support; lack of consistent and transparent communication between teachers and administrators regarding protocols and expectations; and erosion of meaningful interactions with students.

The second and third research questions continued to solicit anecdotal data from participants on how the aforementioned stressors affected their emotional labor strategies in their professional environments. Using values coding to summarize commonalities in participant responses and sorting those commonalities into categories aligned with Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers, the findings suggest an overall inefficacy of current emotional labor strategies to stave off burnout and job dissatisfaction. This inefficacy is largely due to outdated and gendered expectations for teacher behavior and emotional expression that leave teachers feeling overwhelmed and underappreciated, despite still largely enjoying the personal, emotional connections with students that the occupation involves.

By examining teachers' experiences practicing during the pandemic-era through the tri-layered lens of Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers—antecedents, emotional labor strategies, and consequences—it is clear that the pandemic has revealed a need for a comprehensive reexamination of not only what teachers are expected to perform in their day-to-day professional contexts, but also how they are expected to perform these tasks, to what end, and with what supports. The final chapter of this dissertation explores these next steps and provide suggestions both for practitioners and for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions of pandemic-related workload and emotional stress and how the use of emotional labor strategies in response to these stressors affected teachers' feelings of job satisfaction and burnout. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the American workforce has experienced increased rates of burnout, especially amongst healthcare workers and educators (Abramson, 2022; Lowrey, 2022). Upon the start of the 2022-2023 academic year, over half of American public schools reported being understaffed, with schools using teachers and non-teaching staff members outside of their intended duties the most common response to staffing emergencies (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, School Pulse Panel 2022).

In response to the nationwide school staffing crisis, various government and professional bodies have made suggestions for how to increase teacher recruitment and retention. The Dallas Independent School District has experienced success increasing salaries and offering monetary hiring incentives (Wedding, 2022), while, in Florida, Governor DeSantis has waived certain educational and credentialing criteria to allow military veterans to serve as teachers (Phan, 2022), joining Arizona and Alabama, who have instituted similar provisions to fill excessive vacancies (Merod, 2022; Powell Crain, 2022). However, national teachers' unions, including the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) suggested a more comprehensive approach to teacher recruitment and retention that extends

beyond raising salaries and avoids lowering professional credentialing standards for educators. The AFT's recommendations from their July 2022 School Staff Shortage Task Force report included high-quality recruitment and induction support pipelines for new teachers; increased teacher voice and educator autonomy in day-to-day decision making; and expanding access to a livable wage and health and leave benefits that allow school staff to sustainably achieve a work-life balance (American Federation of Teachers Teacher and School Staff Shortage Task Force, 2022). The NEA echoed many of these paths to increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession and emphasizes addressing the unique barriers to recruitment and retention that face educators of color (NEA, 2022b).

The aforementioned AFT (American Federation of Teachers Teacher and School Staff Shortage Task Force, 2022) and NEA (National Education Association, 2022a) reports highlighted the previously documented need for teacher voice and decision-making input on the school, district, and national levels to support teacher retention (Collie, 2021; Kahlenberg & Potter, 2015). Teacher voice, in these studies, tended to equate to decision-making opportunities. Teachers wanted their school, district, and national leaders, and society at large, to view them as professional experts and want their expertise to heavily influence, if not outright dictate, the expectations and very nature of the profession itself.

Previous research on teacher emotional labor, or emotional regulation, and its relationship to burnout and subsequent retention in the profession suggested that teachers need support—in the form of trainings and professional development—to effectively manage their emotions to adhere to the display rules in their professional contexts, and that mastery of this skill will help prevent burnout. While current research investigates teachers' use of emotional

regulation to prevent burnout (Chang, 2020; Chang & Taxer, 2021; Sutton et al., 2009; Taxer & Gross, 2018; Yin et al., 2016), these studies tend to focus on a narrow range of strategies, namely cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression (Gross, 1998), as opposed to the four-pronged emotional labor scale (Çukur, 2009) that allowed for greater nuance in exploring what emotions individuals tend to suppress and highlight, and for what purpose. These studies also do did interrogate the standards of these display rules themselves—in other words, should the professional display rules to which teachers use emotional labor strategies or emotional regulation to adhere be reexamined as well? This study found not only a benefit in using an emotional labor—rather than emotional regulation, model to explore teachers' range of emotional responses to pandemic-related stressors—but also a need for more research to be conducted on the value of current teacher standards for emotional display.

In order to better understand teachers' experiences responding to pandemic-related stressors, this study examined the various facets of pandemic-related stressors, as well as the effects of these stressors on both teachers' abilities to manage their emotions and their feelings of job satisfaction and burnout.

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What stressors—new or exacerbated—do teachers perceive in their profession during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' emotional labor strategies?
3. How have pandemic-related stressors affected teachers' job satisfaction and feelings of burnout?

I utilized a strictly qualitative approach to examine teachers' experiences and highlight teachers' narrative autonomy in recalling their own experiences. I collected the qualitative data for this study through semi-structured interviews via the Zoom online platform to reduce the logistical burden on teachers practicing across the United States while still maintaining personal contact through the face-to-face video chat feature. Each research question addressed in the study required a distinct analytical strategy.

To address the first research question regarding pandemic-era occupational stressors, I used descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2014) to summarize each participant's description of their experiences. I then categorized the coded data according to the preexisting headings found in Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers.

To address the second research question concerning participants' emotional labor strategies, I used *in vivo* coding (Strauss, 1987) to develop codes organically (Leavy, 2017). After deriving codes directly from participants' responses, I used theming to define consistencies amongst teachers' experiences with managing their emotions when encountering pandemic-related stressors.

To address the third research question with respect to participants' perceptions of job satisfaction and burnout, I once again referred to Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers to establish the initial categorization of participant responses. I then used values coding (Saldaña, 2014) to identify commonalities in participants' experiences and sort the data according to those commonalities. These methods resulted in the following three findings:

1. More social-emotional and mental health training and support is needed, but not as an added responsibility.

2. Professional expectations for teacher emotions are outdated.
3. There is a need for teacher voice in community outreach.

This chapter discusses the summary of the findings, and recommendations for teachers and school leaders, and invitations for future research in the areas of teacher retention and recruitment.

Summary of the Findings

The summary of the three findings are discussed in the order they are introduced above. Based on these findings, the section culminates with a graphic which communicates the relationship between teachers' professional experiences during the pandemic and their job satisfaction, elaborating on areas for which future research may be conducted. The chapter concludes with specific, practical recommendations based on each of the three findings.

Social Emotional and Mental Health Training

Two primary stressors that participants identified in this study were general increase in professional responsibilities and a specific increase in social emotional and mental health support for students. During the pandemic, teachers' professional roles expanded, and participants described feeling overwhelmed with the drastic increase in expectations without the time or resources provided to perform any of these additional tasks effectively. Even the few participants who did receive some social emotional training or professional development on student mental health supports expressed that these "trainings" focused on the "what," rather than on the "how," of mental health support and implementation.

Participants, whether or not they received training or resources, felt inefficacy and lack of confidence in administering student social emotional and mental health supports, which

culminated in feelings of guilt and reduced accomplishment. However, running parallel to these feelings of pressure to deliver substantive results without the necessary training were equally strong feelings of disillusionment regarding output related to input. In short, participants felt frustration in not seeing tangible, positive student outcomes as a direct, or indirect, result of what they perceived as extra work. Therefore, while it is important to recognize participants' desire to support students' social emotional and mental health and wellbeing, it is equally, if not more important, to focus on the quality, rather than quantity, of the required training. Providing mandatory training that is (a) not practical in nature and (b) extracurricular to teachers' prior standing professional commitments would exacerbate existing feelings of reduced accomplishment, guilt, and frustration. It is also important to mention that while all participants chose to highlight student mental health, they only acknowledged explicitly the need for teacher mental health support in relation to student needs.

Specific recommendations for the nature of those supports are to follow.

Outdated Professional Standards for Teacher Emotions

Participants' descriptions of how teachers were expected to emote in their profession revealed outdated perceptions and unrealistic expectations. These descriptions are outdated both because of their implicit gendering and their inapplicability to the context of the pandemic and its aftermath.

Expectations for teacher behaviors are already, and long have been, gendered. Within a female-dominated field, studies have documented teachers being expected to be submissive to superiors, perpetually friendly, and at all times, self-sacrificing (Acker, 1995; Cammack & Kalmbach Phillips, 2002; Drudy, 2008; Griffin, 1997; Sabbe & Aelterman, 2007). Participants'

perceptions of teacher emotional display rules, as listed in Chapter 4, reflect these gendered expectations, and highlight the assumption that teachers display non-genuine emotions, assuming a persona while teaching that is expected to mirror the will and ethos of the larger school while also catering to the minute, emotional peculiarities and individualized needs to each student.

In addition to being gendered, analysis of the data in Chapter 4 revealed that participants' own perceptions of how teachers are expected to emote does not reflect adequately the novel, pandemic-era professional responsibilities that emerged, and have been sustained, throughout the past three years. Namely, teacher professional responsibilities during the pandemic expanded to include an unprecedented level of management of student social emotional learning and mental health that cannot be performed when teachers are expected to display unwavering professionalism and neutrality. In fact, participants identified neutrality as a trait that, while appreciated and expected by school leaders and parents, impeded relationships and emotional connections with students. Empathy, in the form of shared emotional responses to uncertainty and tragedy, proved crucial to forming genuine relationships with students during the pandemic. Participants could not achieve all three categories of expected teacher emotion—professionalism, flexibility, and nurture—under the unique circumstances of the pandemic, even if their schools maintained that expectation. Participants described adhering to these emotional display rules as emotionally exhausting and as contributing to feelings of burnout.

Specific recommendations for an auditing procedure to further explore and interrogate these teacher display rules are to follow.

Teacher Voice and Community Outreach

A lack of trust between teachers and other stakeholder groups emerged as a considerable stressor for the study's participants during the pandemic, whether that be in the form of demoralization over perceived villainization and vilification of teachers in larger societal discourse or lack of trust on a smaller scale that school administrators or supervisors would follow through on promises to address challenges that teachers voiced. Though it is not conclusive that hearing and reading about disparaging views of teacher workloads and efforts during the pandemic caused participants to feel burnt out, it is reasonable to draw a connection between participants' feelings of inefficacy and reduced accomplishment and negative feedback—anonymous or otherwise—from non-teachers.

The tone of participants' responses to my final question, which asked what participants would want non-teachers to know or understand about the experience of teaching during the pandemic, was largely mournful and pleading: Participants expressed a desire to feel understood, validated, and appreciated in ways that were not consistently met—if they were met at all—during the pandemic. Similarly, when participants described their interactions with administrators and supervisors, their tone was defeated: They did not express trust that raising issues with either colleagues or supervisor would actually lead to tangible improvements in their professional contexts. In short, participants felt weak.

It is important to note in discussing these findings that my positionality as a teacher allowed me to enjoy a certain level of rapport with the study's participants, even those I had never met in person nor knew professionally nor socially before the study began. Participants often used the remark, "you know," or inserted phrases such as, "as you remember" or, "I don't

have to explain to you. . .” into their responses, even if they had no knowledge of my experiences teaching, beyond my disclosure that I was also a classroom teacher prior to and during the pandemic. This sense of camaraderie and shared understanding revealed for me, unexpectedly, the importance of teacher-to-teacher communication in addressing and solving professional challenges. It is not enough for administrators, politicians, outside researchers, or miscellaneous independent contractors and consultants to solicit teachers’ voices when addressing professional concerns in the field. Similar to the need for peer-to-peer feedback, mentoring, and problem solving amongst students (Akos & Milsom, 2006; Bielaczyc et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2018), it seems that teachers can also benefit from the level of trust that exists amongst peers who have similar professional experiences.

Specific recommendations for creating intentional opportunities for teacher-to-teacher communication and problem solving are to follow.

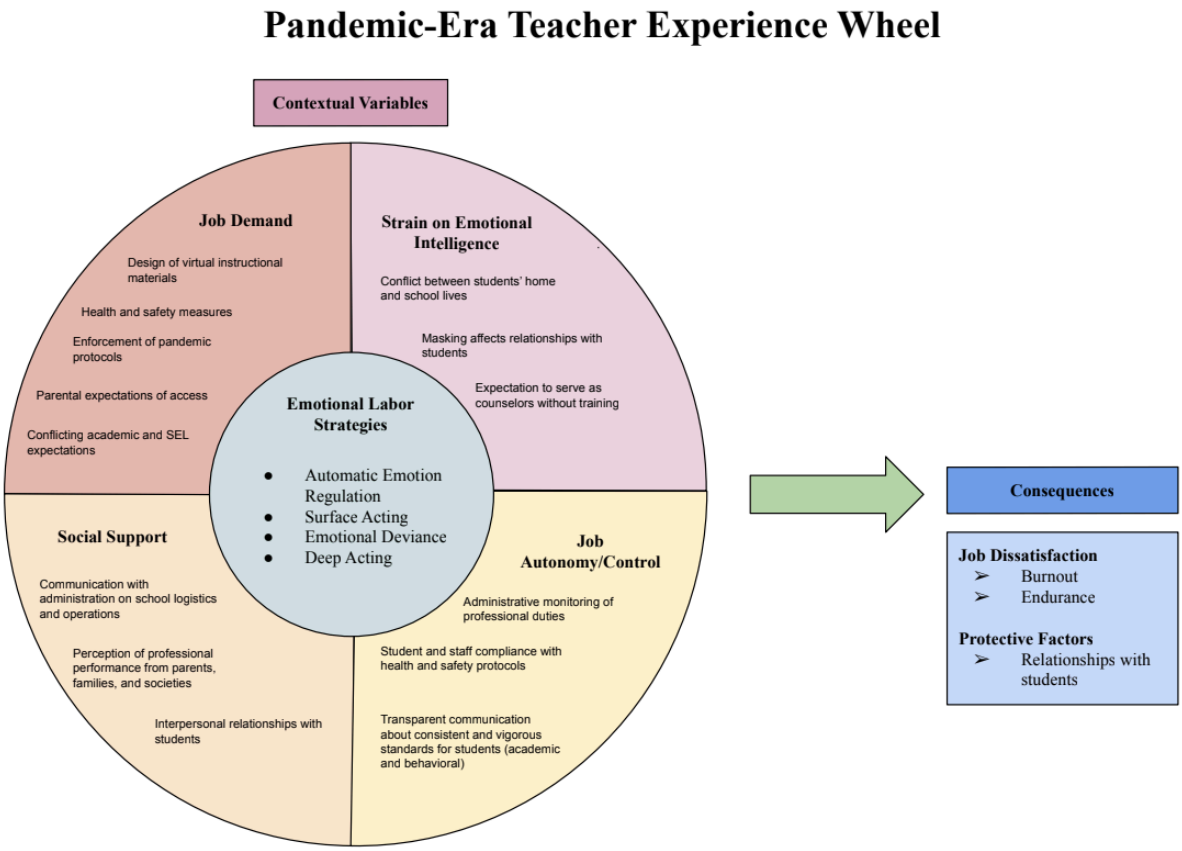
Pandemic-Era Teacher Experience Wheel

In Chapter 4, I organized participants’ qualitative data in accordance with Yin et al.’s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework For Teachers, which provided a comprehensive structure for understanding the relationship between teachers’ emotional labor strategies, their professional and personal characteristics, and their perceptions of their professional satisfaction. However, while the framework acknowledged the connections between common professional and personal antecedents and consequential feelings of job satisfaction or burnout, it does not yet reflect the novel antecedents and consequences of teaching during the pandemic. More context is needed to elaborate on the Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers in order for the model to accurately and comprehensively represent teachers’ pandemic-era professional experiences. Figure 3

illustrates my Pandemic-Era Teacher Experience Wheel, which reflects pandemic and post-pandemic changes to the teaching occupation and their relationship to teacher occupational satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Figure 3

Pandemic-Era Teacher Experience Wheel



Though some of the headings remain the same between this model and Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers—namely: the four antecedents, the emotional labor strategies with the addition of emotional deviance as previously explained, and consequences—the main difference between the two is the relationship communicated between teachers'

occupational experiences, the emotional labor strategies they employ, and their job satisfaction or burnout. While the structure of Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers implied that the use of emotional labor strategies directly affected teachers' degree of job satisfaction, I found in my study that emotional labor strategies are neutral, rather than positive, by default. All participants utilized emotional labor strategies, but having these skills was not the antidote to burnout that the Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers suggests. The literature suggested that there is a way for teachers to use emotional labor strategies as a tool to prevent or mitigate burnout, but that mindset placed the burden of retention in the profession squarely on teachers themselves, rather than on the system in which they teach. My findings suggest that it was the context in which teachers were forced to use emotional labor strategies that caused burnout. The context, reflected in my framework as "contextual variables," rather than antecedents, rendered the emotional labor strategies not effective enough to stave off burnout and job dissatisfaction.

Another difference between the model I provided, and Yin et al.'s (2019) Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers, is the consequences of teachers' use of emotional labor strategies within the contextual variables represented in the four quadrants. Rather than separating consequences into "burnout" and "job satisfaction," I instead used the categories, "job dissatisfaction" and "protective factors." Across my 16 interviews, no participants were satisfied with their current or former jobs as classroom teachers. Instead, teachers identified protective factors, particularly positive relationships with students, as reasons for staying in the profession despite the negative aspects of the career. To further explain participants' descriptions of their job dissatisfaction, I distinguished between burnout, characterized by disillusionment and lack of

self-confidence, and endurance, referring to participants' conscious decision to accept consistently negative experiences and persevere in the profession regardless of dissatisfaction. The two states of being are not mutually exclusive—elements of burnout could manifest while one is enduring, but burnout alone would be more likely to result in premature exit from the profession than would an intention to accept an unideal occupational situation.

It is important to note that, while this study's focus on the pandemic and immediate post-pandemic period of 2020-2022 informs the Pandemic-Era Teacher Experience Wheel above, the implications of this graphic extend beyond the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The contextual factors illustrated in this framework have now established a precedent that is bound to influence the teaching profession even once the immediate threat of viral contagion abates. As an example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants described a new job demand: both enforcing and executing health and safety protocols to help mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Consequently, even as the COVID-19 threat lessens, there is no reason to believe that teachers will not be called upon again to carry out similar tasks in the future. Similarly, now that infrastructure for virtual instruction exists in educational spaces, it is reasonable for teachers to assume that they could be called upon in the future to transition their curricula to a virtual platform if, for whatever reason, in-person learning is suspended in the future. Thus, the model is applicable indefinitely to the post-COVID-19 educational landscape.

Recommendations for Practitioners

This section discusses recommendations for both teachers and school leaders to reduce teacher burnout and increase retention. These three recommendations serve as invitations for school leaders to consider as they explore methods to curb burnout and turnover amongst their

teachers. The first recommendation suggests how to prioritize teacher training to better support teacher mental health without adding an extra responsibility to teachers' dockets. The second recommendation introduces the idea of an equity audit process to further explore and identify outdated expectations for teacher emotional display rules. The final recommendation suggests changing the manner in which schools, districts, and governing bodies conduct research on teacher wellbeing and retention by leveraging interpersonal relationships between teachers.

Foster Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to Holistically Address Student Care

Participants repeatedly expressed frustration with being expected to act as counselors or therapists without the training and certifications that accompany those professions. Though aspects of teaching, particularly the interpersonal aspects in building student-teacher relationships, naturally employ some counseling or therapeutic skills, the expectation cannot be that teachers are auxiliary counselors or therapists. To hold teachers to the standards of these extra-pedagogical professions is bound to not only result in subpar counseling and therapy services for students, but also in increased feelings of guilt and inefficacy in teachers. Any attempts at training teachers to be counselors or therapists devalues the coursework and training that goes into becoming licensed counseling or therapeutic professionals, just as attempts to train counselors and therapists to be classroom teachers would devalue the coursework and specific training that go into becoming a teacher.

Hence, my recommendation is for schools to create Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in which teachers, counselors, and therapists—depending on the staffing particulars at a given school—are given designated time to examine student cases holistically, both from academic and social emotional angles, and brainstorm trauma-informed solutions. In respecting

teachers' feelings of overwhelming emotional exhaustion given the multitude of different tasks added to their list of professional responsibilities during the pandemic, my suggestion is that these PLCs replace, at least for a predetermined period of time—such as a semester or an academic year—another professional development-related responsibility. These responsibilities vary by school, but examples could include, but are not limited to, weekly unit and lesson preparation, standardized testing preparation or student work reflection, and school-wide instructional practices training. While these priorities may hold value or merit under normal circumstances, the results of this study strongly suggest that, even over three years after the first COVID-19 case was reported in the United States, American education is not back to normal because of long-lasting social emotional and mental health ramifications on students and teachers. Concerted effort to focus on and spotlight social emotional and mental health will not only help address existing concerns regarding child and teen depression and suicide (Pincus et al., 2020; Standish, 2021), but may also increase teacher efficacy and confidence, thus decreasing feelings of burnout and instances of teacher turnover.

Invite Participation in School-Based, Comprehensive Equity Audit of How Teachers are Expected to Emote

Table 3, previously illustrated in Chapter 4, represents a compilation of all sixteen participants' perceptions of how teachers are expected to emote. Despite the fact that commonalities in perception existed amongst all participants to the extent that responses from all participants—from seven states and a variety of types of high schools—could be categorized into three themes, it is still unreasonable to assume that school and community-specific factors and variables, such as immigrant population and age and generation of school leadership, would not

have a possible impact on each teacher's experience of how teachers are expected to emote in order to align with their schools', and their communities', display rules. Therefore, it would be beneficial to conduct community and even school-specific equity audits, exploring the applicable factors and variables that intersect to determine how teacher emotion display rules are constructed in that particular context. The audit would reflect a school's curiosity in probing factors that affect school community members' perspectives on gender roles, roles of education in a society, and expectations of teacher-student relationships, to name a few. Ideally, the auditor would be a teacher, or would be a group of stakeholders led by a teacher, and this individual or group would conduct interviews of parents and families, school leaders and administrators, school staff, teachers, students, and alumni to paint a comprehensive picture of that community's expectations for how teachers are expected to emote.

Once the auditor(s) collect and code the various perspectives, the next step is to name how teachers in this community are expected to emote, and to explore the values that are reflected in these expectations. Then, the group can share its findings with the larger school community and determine what steps could be taken to update teacher display rules so that adherence to these expectations does not contribute to teacher burnout nor turnover.

Use Teachers to Conduct Qualitative Research on Teacher Experiences

The last recommendation for practitioners involves leveraging teachers as researchers in collecting and communicating information on educator expertise to the school community at large. Participants in this study felt that their efforts were at best, misunderstood, and at worst, unappreciated, and many attributed this misalignment to ignorance and miscommunication: During the pandemic, their students' parents and society at large did not understand the amount

of work that went into teaching and caring for students during this time. Participants also expressed comfort and camaraderie in commiserating and sharing experiences with their teacher peers, but admitted that while these relationships aided emotional survival, they did not necessarily lead to any tangible solutions or significant, long-term reduction of stress.

Therefore, enlisting teachers as researchers will accomplish two goals: (a) Teachers will have direct access to community stakeholders with whom to share information that is timely and accurately reflective of their experiences and (b) School leaders will communicate that teacher-to-teacher discourse is not only valuable to teachers' mental health, but also to the larger school community: By soliciting feedback based on these conversations, teachers will feel heard, valued, and less isolated from school leadership. Teacher discourse will feel less isolated and more productive if they are encouraged to share their findings towards a commonly shared goal with school and community leadership.

This type of structured teacher-to-teacher dialogue will not take the place of informal chatter; rather, it can exist in various modes throughout the school day and physical school environment depending on the needs of the community. Some schools may rotate department chairs, leading focus groups during shared preparatory periods. Other schools may enlist teachers enrolled in graduate programs to conduct quantitative surveys on which teacher researchers may then follow up using qualitative methods. Still, other schools may offer teachers the opportunity to present during professional development periods on topical school challenges they and their peers may be facing in an effort to create a think-tank of possible solutions. The opportunities are endless for schools to create opportunities for teachers to have agency amongst each other for the overall betterment of the school community.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings from this study suggest various spaces in which future research is needed. This study highlights and uplifts the voices of sixteen teachers and now-former teachers who practiced or continue to practice across the United States in a variety of settings, but further conversations with a greater number of educators would be needed to effectively generalize the findings. The Pandemic-Era Teacher Experience Wheel has the potential to develop into a more reliable framework for understanding he relationships between contextual factors, emotional labor strategies, and feelings of burnout in the teaching profession post-COVID-19, but more studies with greater numbers of participants and opportunities for triangulation with quantitative data would be recommended to increase the model's validity.

Future studies may disaggregate this and additional qualitative data by variables such as sex, years of experience, and type of school context. For example, one participant suggested that teaching at a parochial school affected the expectations for her relationships with her students, and future research might ask if the explicit presence of prayer was effective in facilitating teacher-student relationships, even when religious services were not held in person during the pandemic.

This study also recommends further research on the gendered nature of teacher emotional display rules. While this study highlighted the inherent conflicts in teacher display expectations in the pandemic context, more research should be conducted on the effects of specifically gendered teacher emotional expectations on the formations and quality of teacher-student relationships. For example, the study findings in Chapter 4 mentioned that students responded positively to genuine expressions of emotion from their teachers, and it would be worthwhile to

investigate how genuinely students consider gendered performances from their teachers to be. Do students consider performances of selflessness, warmth, and nurture to be genuine if they know that teachers are expected to act that way?

Lastly, the study recommends further research in levels of trust between adult school stakeholder groups, particularly between teachers, administrators and supervisors, and parents and community members. Participant anecdotes and reflections revealed levels of distrust amongst these groups that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated, and further research on barriers to consistently trusting communication between these groups is needed to ensure strong foundations for any problem-solving initiatives currently in the pipeline to gain any traction or enjoy any lasting effects.

Conclusion

This study sought to gain a better understanding of teachers' professional stressors and management of emotions in response to these stressors during the COVID-19 pandemic-era, particularly from early Spring 2020 to late Spring 2022. This study examined teachers' perspectives on how the pandemic affected their professional responsibilities, and how both novel and preexisting stressors affected their ability to manage their emotions effectively with their peers, their superiors, and their students. By placing teachers at the center of the research and by privileging their voices in the analysis, this study determined that conducting qualitative research in this manner is the most effective way to pinpoint specific factors that encourage and discourage teachers to remain in the profession. Burnout and job dissatisfaction continue to impact teacher retention even as the pandemic wanes, but this study and its findings suggest that

future research must draw from teacher testimonials from the pandemic to strengthen American schooling practices for generations to come.

APPENDIX A

Copyright Permission Email From The Danielson Group

Re: Copyright Permissions

The Danielson Group <contact@danielsongroup.org>
Wed 2/1/2023 9:32 AM
To: Barnes, Megan Megan.Barnes@lmu.edu

Hello Megan

Nina Benegas is granted permission to use for reprint and reference the FFT in her dissertation and for research purposes only.

The Danielson Group Team
www.danielsongroup.org
contact@danielsongroup.org

On Mon, Jan 30, 2023 at 6:40 PM Barnes, Megan <Megan.Barnes@lmu.edu> wrote:

Hello,
I am working with PhD candidate Nina Benegas on edits for her Doctoral dissertation at Loyola Marymount University. On her behalf, I am inquiring about copyright permissions, if they are needed, possibility of attaining them, etc. for the information below:

SMART CARD
THE FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING
PDF PAGE 2
DOMAINS 1-4

Ms. Benegas used the graphic and showed it to the participants (educators) of her study during the interview process of her study to help them organize their thoughts when they were asked about how the pandemic affected their professional responsibilities. Ms. Benegas would like to include the graphic from the Smart Card for academic and scholarly purposes in her dissertation. As the copyright holder for this piece, I am hoping you are able to grant written permission (either via email or documentation) for Ms. Benegas to include this information for her PhD dissertation with proper attribution to the company.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of the dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of the dissertation. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you.

By emailing back with allowance, you confirm that The Danielson Group owns the copyright to the above-described material and has the right to grant permission.

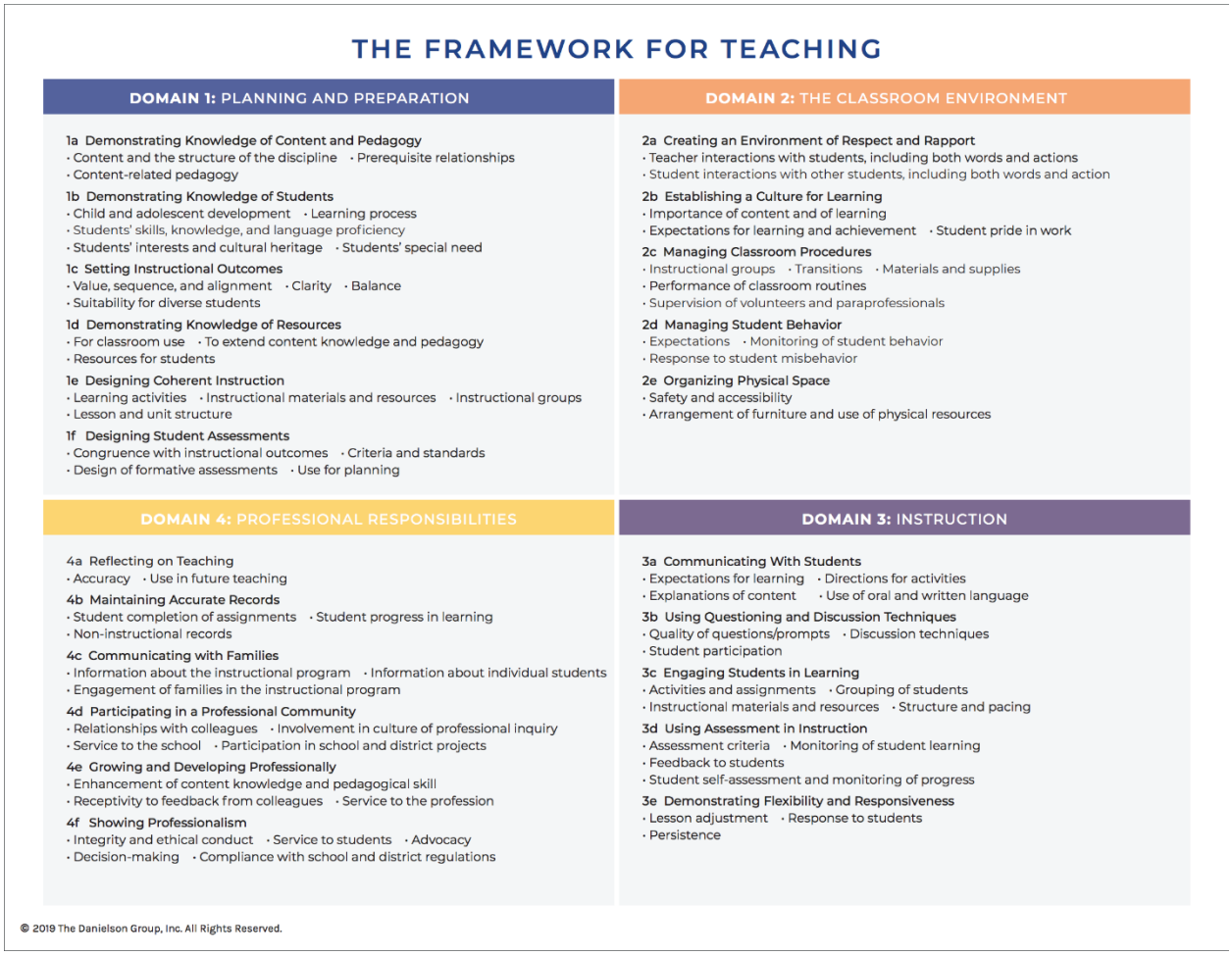
If there's further information needed, please let me know. I do hope to hear back as soon as possible. Thank you.
Megan Barnes

Megan Barnes, M.A.
Rhetorical Arts Faculty
Loyola Marymount University
University Hall 3227

Email: Megan.Barnes@lmu.edu

APPENDIX B

The Danielson Framework for Teaching



THE FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING

DOMAIN 1: PLANNING AND PREPARATION

1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy
· Content and the structure of the discipline · Prerequisite relationships
· Content-related pedagogy

1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students
· Child and adolescent development · Learning process
· Students' skills, knowledge, and language proficiency
· Students' interests and cultural heritage · Students' special need

1c Setting Instructional Outcomes
· Value, sequence, and alignment · Clarity · Balance
· Suitability for diverse students

1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources
· For classroom use · To extend content knowledge and pedagogy
· Resources for students

1e Designing Coherent Instruction
· Learning activities · Instructional materials and resources · Instructional groups
· Lesson and unit structure

1f Designing Student Assessments
· Congruence with instructional outcomes · Criteria and standards
· Design of formative assessments · Use for planning

DOMAIN 2: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport
· Teacher interactions with students, including both words and actions
· Student interactions with other students, including both words and action

2b Establishing a Culture for Learning
· Importance of content and of learning
· Expectations for learning and achievement · Student pride in work

2c Managing Classroom Procedures
· Instructional groups · Transitions · Materials and supplies
· Performance of classroom routines
· Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals

2d Managing Student Behavior
· Expectations · Monitoring of student behavior
· Response to student misbehavior

2e Organizing Physical Space
· Safety and accessibility
· Arrangement of furniture and use of physical resources

DOMAIN 4: PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

4a Reflecting on Teaching
· Accuracy · Use in future teaching

4b Maintaining Accurate Records
· Student completion of assignments · Student progress in learning
· Non-instructional records

4c Communicating with Families
· Information about the instructional program · Information about individual students
· Engagement of families in the instructional program

4d Participating in a Professional Community
· Relationships with colleagues · Involvement in culture of professional inquiry
· Service to the school · Participation in school and district projects

4e Growing and Developing Professionally
· Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill
· Receptivity to feedback from colleagues · Service to the profession

4f Showing Professionalism
· Integrity and ethical conduct · Service to students · Advocacy
· Decision-making · Compliance with school and district regulations

DOMAIN 3: INSTRUCTION

3a Communicating With Students
· Expectations for learning · Directions for activities
· Explanations of content · Use of oral and written language

3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
· Quality of questions/prompts · Discussion techniques
· Student participation

3c Engaging Students in Learning
· Activities and assignments · Grouping of students
· Instructional materials and resources · Structure and pacing

3d Using Assessment in Instruction
· Assessment criteria · Monitoring of student learning
· Feedback to students
· Student self-assessment and monitoring of progress

3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness
· Lesson adjustment · Response to students
· Persistence

The Danielson Group. (2019). *The Framework for Teaching.* Copyright 2019 by The Danielson Group. Reprinted with permission.

APPENDIX C

Demographics Questionnaire

Participant Criteria Questions

1. Do you teach primarily high school students (grades 9-12; ages 14-18 approx.)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
2. In your current or most recent role in education, are you primarily student-facing, either teaching or facilitating academic instruction? (Examples: content-area teacher; Special Education teacher; English Language Development Teacher. Non-Examples: Behavioral Interventionist, Guidance Counselor; School Psychologist)
    a. Yes
    b. No
3. As of June 2022, do you have a minimum of three years of consecutive teaching experience within the same school? (Current status as an employed teacher as of the receipt of this survey is not required.)
    a. Yes
    b. No

If you selected "No" for any of the above questions, you do not meet the requirements for participation in this study. Thank you for your interest. You may exit the survey.

Demographics Questions

1. Please indicate your ethnicity.
    a. White/European

b. Black and/or African American

c. Indigenous/Native or Alaska Native

d. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

e. Asian

f. Latinx/o/a

g. Multi-Racial [please specify]:

h. Prefer to self-identify [please specify]:

2. Please indicate your gender.

a. Female

b. Male

c. Non-Binary/Third Gender

d. Prefer not to disclose

e. Prefer to self-identify [please specify]:

School Setting Questions

1. Please indicate the school setting in which you currently teach or have most recently taught.

a. Traditional Public

b. Public Charter

c. Private, non-denominational

d. Private, religious

e. Vocational-technical

f. Other [please specify]:

2. Please describe your current or most recent educator role.
    a. Content-area teacher
    b. Special Education Teacher
    c. Special Education Instructional Aide
    d. English Language Development Teacher
    e. Other [please specify]:
3. Please describe the grade levels you teach or have most currently taught (select all that apply).
    a. 9th
    b. 10th
    c. 11th
    d. 12th
4. Please indicate your total years of experience, as of June 2022, as an educator.
    a. 3-5 years
    b. 6-10 years
    c. 11-15 years
    d. 16+ years

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Fixed Questions:

1. Can you please describe your school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic between March 2020 and June 2022? What changes did students and staff experience over those two years?
2. Please look at this infographic of teachers' professional responsibilities (The Danielson Framework, attached as an addendum to this application). As a teacher, which of these responsibilities, if any, did COVID-19 impact? Or, are there any new responsibilities you have acquired during the pandemic that are not included in this framework?
3. What stressors did you experience at work while teaching during the pandemic? Were these new or were they exacerbated by the pandemic?
4. Can you tell me about a time in the past two years at work when you have genuinely expressed the way you feel, either with your students, coworkers, and/or supervisors?
5. Can you tell me about a time in the past two years at work when you have tried to control your feelings to have the emotions you're expected to display, either with your students, coworkers, and/or supervisors?
6. How do you think teachers are expected to display their emotions, or emote, while at work?

7. Can you tell me about a time in the past two years at work when you have put effort towards actually feeling the emotion you need to display, either with your students, coworkers, and/or supervisors?
8. Can you tell me about a time in the past two years at work when you have genuinely expressed how you feel in adverse situations even if it is not the expression that is expected of you as a teacher, either with your students, coworkers, and/or supervisors?
9. What are your feelings towards your profession and your career as a teacher as of now? Do you see yourself continuing on in teaching; why or why not?
10. Is there anything you have not yet mentioned today that you think is especially important for people to know about what it has been like to be a teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Follow-Up or Probing Questions:

- In the scenario you just described, do you feel like you can identify and name that emotion in the moment?
- In the scenario you just described, do you use self-reflection to understand the factors that contributed to those emotions and how those emotions impacted you?
- In the scenario you just described, did your emotions, thoughts, or biases influence your behavior or reaction?
- When you're experiencing these strong emotions, do you manage them in ways that impact others, either negatively or positively?

- When you're feeling that frustration, are you able to get through it, and what does that look like for you?
- When you feel stressed or nervous at work, are you able to calm yourself down, and how?

APPENDIX E

Member Checking Email

Dear ___,

Happy New Year! As we close out 2022 and begin 2023, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank you again for your generosity in participating in my dissertation study. With 16 participants from [almost] all regions of the United States, I had hours and pages of valuable raw data to work through and I am immensely grateful for your invaluable insight as I prepare to finish my project in the next few months.

As promised, I wanted to touch base with you as part of the member checking process. As a reminder, member checking is completely optional for this study. If you would like to respond to any of these questions or provide any commentary, you are free to do so before January 13, 2023. You are also welcome to ignore this request entirely and I will proceed with the information I have included below. I have included the following information in *italics*, and information that you may supply in bold.

1. *Your pseudonym* - would you prefer a different pseudonym?
2. *Follow-up questions (if applicable)* - answer questions if desired
3. *Quotations to be attributed to your pseudonym in the study* - provide any clarification or changes as desired (please note that, in my work with the raw interview transcripts, I used my best judgement in making certain grammatical changes and eliminating/adjusting certain speaking mannerisms only if they obstructed meaning or clarity; for example, repetition of words and phrases, and the use of the words, "um" and "like" if they did not directly contribute to the meaning of the quotation. I will also be working with an editor as part of the pre-publication review process who might suggest additional grammatical changes to the direct quotations, but participant voice and meaning will be prioritized and preserved first and foremost.)

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at this email address. I will also be in touch when my final dissertation is available for viewing in its entirety on ProQuest. I wish you and your loved ones a safe and joyous holiday season and a happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Nina Benegas, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice
School of Education (SOE)
Pronouns: *she/her/hers*
Loyola Marymount University

APPENDIX F

Recruitment Email

Dear ___,

I am currently a high school English teacher and a third-year doctoral candidate at Loyola Marymount University in the School of Education's Doctorate in Educational Leadership for Social Justice Program.

For my dissertation, I'm seeking to understand high school teachers' experiences teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I'd love to hear from high school teachers who've had 3 consecutive years teaching in the classroom to participate in my study.

First, if you're interested and you're a high school teacher with three consecutive years in the classroom, please fill out this quick form.

Second, if you know of any fellow teachers who have taught high school for three consecutive years, please forward this email to fellow teachers. I would like to hear from potential participants no later than Tuesday, May 31.

Thank you for agreeing to help me reach as many teachers as possible from all over the country. I am so excited to talk to teachers about their experiences teaching during this challenging time. Have a great week and thank you again for your help!

Best,
Nina

Nina Benegas, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice
School of Education (SOE)
Pronouns: *she/her/hers*

APPENDIX G

Notification of Participation in Study

Hello!

Congratulations! You have been selected as a participant in my qualitative study. Thank you for your interest and willingness to participate! Here are your next steps:

1. Please use this link to schedule a 60-minute interview session over Zoom. If you would prefer an in-person interview and are local to Los Angeles, please email me directly and we can schedule a time and location to meet. Interviews will take place between now and September 30.

2. Attached, please find the Experimental Subjects Bill of Rights and the Informed Consent Form for this study. Please read the Bill of Rights and read and sign the Informed Consent Form; email the Informed Consent Form (with an electronic signature or scanned with a wet signature) to me before your scheduled interview session.

I am still accepting participants for this study, so please feel free to share this Google Form with any interested colleagues or acquaintances who might be willing to share their experiences.

Thank you again for your willingness to engage in this project. Do not hesitate to email me directly with any questions or concerns. I look forward to speaking with you!

Sincerely,

Nina Benegas, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice
School of Education (SOE)
Pronouns: *she/her/hers*

APPENDIX H

Informed Consent Form

Loyola Marymount University
Informed Consent Form

TITLE: **Are the Teachers Alright?: An investigation Into High School Teachers' Use of Emotional Labor in the COVID-19 Context**

INVESTIGATOR: **Nina Benegas, School of Education, Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice, (508)-951-1182, nbatt@lion.lmu.edu**

ADVISOR: **Lauren Casella, Ed.D., School of Education, Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice, lcasella@lmu.edu**

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate high school teachers' experiences teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. You will be asked to complete a brief survey to determine if you meet the minimum qualifications for the study. If selected, you will be asked to participate in a 60-minute interview either in person or via Zoom. The investigator will ask for permission to record the audio of your interview.

RISKS: Risks associated with this study include: embarrassment, nervousness, or vulnerability when discussing the management of your own emotions in stressful situations while at work. The investigator's positionality as a teacher is meant to provide a sense of safety in each interview session. Additionally, the real names of subjects will not be published in the study. Any possibly identifiable details such as grade taught or city/region of employment will be too generalized to indicate any specific individual. This should assuage any nervousness around retaliation or recrimination in the work place.

BENEFITS: The potential benefits include an opportunity for subjects to reflect on their professional and personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these experiences have affected their tenures as teachers. The investigator is trying to highlight and amplify teacher voice, and a benefit of the study is the subject having the opportunity to share their own stories of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INCENTIVES: You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study and participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The investigator will collect subjects' names, email addresses, and demographic information (gender, ethnicity, city and state of residence, job title, type of school where employed, and years of experience) in connection with the data. Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). All research materials and consent forms will be stored on a secure server to which only the investigator has access. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled, your class standing or relationship with Loyola Marymount University.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. The Primary Investigator's phone number is (508)-951-1182 and her email address is nbatt@lion.lmu.edu. Summary of research results will be available approximately May 2023.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. If the study design or use of the information is changed I will be informed and my consent reobtained. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact Dr. David Moffet, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659 or by email at David.Moffet@lmu.edu.

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

APPENDIX I

Copyright Permission Email From Alica A. Grandey

Re: Copyright Permissions

Grandey, Alicia Ann <aag6@psu.edu>
Thu 3/23/2023 11:06 AM
To: Barnes, Megan Megan.Barnes@lmu.edu

Hello Megan!

I give permission to Nina to use the model from my research.

A.A.Gradey

On Thurs, Mar 23, 2023 at 10:07 AM Barnes, Megan <Megan.Barnes@lmu.edu> wrote:

Hello Dr. Grandey,

I am working with PhD candidate Nina C. Benegas on edits for her dissertation for the degree Doctor of Education at Loyola Marymount University. Her dissertation is entitled:
Are the Teachers Alright?: An Investigation into High School Teachers' Use of Emotional Labor in the COVID-19 Context and its Role in their Professional Experiences

On her behalf, I am inquiring about copyright permissions for reprint in the dissertation of the below framework adapted from your model on Emotional Labor:

The Emotional Labor Framework for Teachers

Adapted in:

Yin, H., Huang, S., & **Chen, G.** (2019). The relationships between teachers' emotional labor and their burnout and satisfaction: A meta-analytic review. *Educational Research Review*, 100283. doi:10.1016/j.edurev.2019.100283.

Ms. Benegas uses the framework from Page 3 of this article to organize her own frameworks in Chapters 4 and 5 of her dissertation. We contacted Yin et al. regarding permissions, and they directed us to you as the originator of the Framework. As the copyright holder for this piece, I am hoping you are able to grant written permission (either via email or documentation) for Ms. Benegas to use this framework with scholarly intent for her PhD dissertation with proper attribution included.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of the dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of the dissertation. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you.

By emailing back with allowance, you confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material and has the right to grant permission.

If there's further information needed, please let me know. I do hope to hear back as soon as possible. Thank you.
Megan Barnes

Megan Barnes, M.A.
Rhetorical Arts Faculty
Loyola Marymount University
University Hall 3227

Email: Megan.Barnes@lmu.edu

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