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'If I Don't Have That, No Learning": Significance of Student-Centered Affective Labor Among Public High School Teachers in Tacoma, WA

Delaney Dawson

"IF I DON'T HAVE THAT, NO LEARNING": SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDENT-CENTERED AFFECTIVE LABOR AMONG PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN TACOMA, WA

by

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Introduction

"Why would you want to be a teacher?" My beloved science teacher turned away from me and drew a striated pyramid of on the board, writing the titles of various careers in each strata of hierarchical prestige. At the zenith, *environmental engineer*; at the bottom, *high school science teacher.* He asked, *"if you're capable of a career at the top, why would you strive for the bottom?"* I politely expressed my understanding, but came away from the conversation confused. I went off to college to study biology on a pre-medical track before soon discovering that the "hard sciences" were not for me and that I did, in fact, want to pursue a career in education. But for the years in between, I internalized the message from this teacher I so respected—I was driven, talented, and capable of obtaining the education to become a successful, highly-paid contributor to any academic field I chose, and so I would "aim high," for those careers in the upper strata. However, in my undergraduate college experience, I have experienced great challenges and great success that have helped me more fully realize the value of my own K-12 teachers—those passionate, intelligent, skilled individuals who helped me achieve the academic and personal feats that brought me this far in the first place. And so, I decided that I wanted to finally pursue the career which appealed to me years before.

As my career path and motivations shifted, I began to critically examine those internalized messages that steered me away from the career path to which I am now drawn. This project comes out of that curiosity toward my own internalized messages, and further wondering, how do teachers receive and interpret these messages? What messages about teaching had my science teacher received and internalized that led him to discourage me from pursuing the same career? It is with these dilemmas (and the guilt I carried from believing myself "above" teaching) that I began to conduct research for my senior thesis.

At the outset of my research, I realized how little formal research exists on the subject of teachers within the growing field of educational anthropology. Of the many unanswered questions in this field, I decided to inquire into the teacher's interpretation of their own role. In this thesis, I analyze what thirteen high school teachers value in their career, especially in the context of their descriptions of their labor, their financial and non-financial compensation, and their relationships at various levels of the institution of the public school. Thus, the following question guides my analysis: *How do teachers conceptualize the values and rewards of their career through their professional interactions at various levels of the institution? What do teachers consider valuable in their career, and what do they consider impediments to pursuing those values?*

Methods

To investigate this question, I began to contact my former teachers to see if they would be interested in talking about their career with me for my thesis. These teachers, to my delight, were willing and eager to participate, and I was able to recruit even more teachers to my research endeavors. I conducted semi-structured interviews with thirteen teachers, yielding around fifteen hours of interview data. The semi-structured format lends itself to the kind of reflective interview I desired: I could ask questions about topics or themes I was interested in pursuing, and my interviewees could lead the conversation to the aspects of their experiences as teachers that they found significant, thus furthering my research questions and investigation in a productive and teacher-centered manner. For example, in pursuit of knowledge of the teacher as a college/career mentor, I asked my interlocutors if they consider themselves mentors to their students. By formulating the question in this way, I gave teachers the rhetorical space to carry the discussion to those

aspects of their career they find most compelling, significant, or valuable. As we will see, this rhetorical flexibility led to significant shifts in my research focus and analytical drive.

Because of my own positive, yet complex, experiences with teachers in public schools, I decided to interview teachers from my own alma matter in Tacoma, Washington.[1] Through my own connections to the school and its faculty, I easily secured interviews with ten teachers. Of the ten teachers at my alma matter, nine of them are my former teachers. From these initial interviewees, I planned to ask for their recommendations for teachers at other schools whom I could reach out to in request for an interview. This strategy was largely unsuccessful. I ended up searching the webpages of Tacoma's public high schools and "cold-calling" many teachers via e-mail. Ultimately, I did not anticipate the difficulty I would face in attempting to recruit teachers to whom I had no previous connection. In hindsight, the reason for my struggle is clear: I conducted my research over the summer, a limited and valuable period of rest for teachers (as we will see more clearly later in this thesis). For this reason, I am exceedingly grateful to all of my interlocutors for their dedicated participation in my project during a time which I understand to be cherished by my participants.

I decided that confidentiality would be important to maintain for my project because the nature of my project entailed interviewing teachers who were directly connected through various professional and personal networks, and I wanted to ensure my informants' confidence no matter where the conversation led us. In addition to using

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[1] Tacoma is a historically industrial city founded in 1872 (History of Pierce County) situated on the Puget Sound about thirty miles south of Seattle in Washington State, U.S.A. Tacoma is home to a population of approximately 207,948 people (Tacoma, Washington Population 2018). The Tacoma Public School District serves about 30,000 children (About Tacoma Public Schools); it runs 35 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 10 high schools and 4 early learning centers (About Tacoma Public Schools). The focus of my thesis will be upon the high schools in this public school district.

pseudonyms for all teachers, I use pseudonyms for the specific schools, and have mixed up which teachers work at which schools.

It is noteworthy that a majority of my interlocutors are male. This does not reflect the national composition of teachers' gender identities, as a study during the 2015-2016 school year found that the majority (59%) of teachers in high schools are female (Taie & Goldring, 2017), while only 30.8% of my sample is female. Although my interview data did not yield stark differences between the expressions of male versus female interlocutors, the gendered composition of my interlocutor selection will be important to keep in mind throughout this thesis, especially in analysis of the ways in which the feminization and professionalization of teaching has affected my interlocutors. Additionally, the vast majority of my sample are white teachers; and while this reflects the 80% majority white population of teachers in the United States (Taie & Goldring, 2017), I do not explore issues of race and identity in analysis of my interlocutors' comments about their career.

My sample of teachers is noticeably small. The difficulty I had in recruiting teachers from schools beyond my alma matter is the primary reason for the scale. In recognizing this fact, it is important to note that the purpose of this project was never to conduct research with and draw conclusions about the experiences of a representative sample of public school teachers across the United States. Instead, I was inspired by my own experience with that science teacher at my alma matter and wanted to explore how teachers from a setting with which I'm familiar view their career and experiences as a teacher. While I wish I could interview more teachers in more contexts, the appendix of this thesis provides suggestions for further research that could lend even greater insight into the world of the public school educator in the United States.

Positionality

I commend the modern anthropological practice of recognizing the positionality of the researcher, and I feel that it is important at this point to address my own positionality and the nature of my relationships to my interlocutors. I know and have been the pupil of all but four of these teachers. As a result, before conducting my research, I already held an opinion of or esteem for many of my interlocutors, and, out of curiosity about entering the profession, had already inquired into some of my teachers' lives, thus developing some limited understanding of their experience in the career. As an anthropologist, I tried to maintain a level of professionalism and relativism in my conduct. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize my relationship to many of these teachers and my personal experience in the context in which they teach.

I also acknowledge that it is possible that these relationships affected my interactions with my interlocutors. Initially, I worried that I might encounter a similar struggle to Ortner (2003)—with difficulty balancing between a familiar, shared world and being the distanced, formal role of the anthropologist. But, I realized that these individuals, by the nature of their profession, are used to me—and hundreds of other young people—taking notes and hanging on their every word. As a past student and future teacher (rather than a fellow teacher), I am not a "native ethnographer," among my informants; but Narayan (1993) refutes the reality of this term anyway, on the basis that "a culture is not homogenous, a society is differentiated, and a professional identity that involves problematizing lived reality inevitably creates difference" (Narayan, 1993, p. 671). In preparing for these interviews, I reflected substantially on the nature of my role as anthropologist and as past student to many. Most importantly, I took great measures to

assure my informants of confidentiality—though most teachers expressed amusement at my emphasis of this method, as they assured me it was not of concern.

Finally, I feel it is important to add a note about my difficulties in creating a critical distance in research among a group I admire and respect. The study of teachers and their work is a tricky one in that a student's experience with teachers feels very personal (we all had experiences with, and hold opinions of teachers), and the sort of analytical distance necessary for anthropological inquiry problematizes certain value-laden judgments of teachers. In this way, I have struggled to critically distance myself from my interlocutors and research, to call into question the assumptions that I and my interlocutors hold about education. It is possible that my professed fondness of teachers and the work that they do may have made me more inclined to emphasize threads in my research that may paint teachers in a positive light; however, I tried to counter this inclination by looking realistically at how teachers discussed their careers, by bringing elements of the larger discourses surrounding teachers' work, and by trying to contextualize teachers' work in broader anthropological and educational frameworks. Ultimately, I want to emphasize that while I am an admirer of these teachers' work and feel an anticipatory identification with the work and identity of teaching, the purpose of this anthropological endeavor has always been to more deeply understand the way that *teachers* conceptualize their *own* work—not to judge, or place value judgments on the work that they do.

Guiding Theory

My research will be largely guided by existing work on narratives by and about teachers, as well as the role of the teacher in American culture. I am interested in the ways in which teachers interact with larger narratives about their profession. Teachers, as individuals, are influenced by social discourses and power dynamics (Greene in Biklen,

1995). For instance, the esteem of teachers may directly impact a teacher's own self-esteem (Herbst, 1991). In response, teachers tell stories, which have been studied as responses to these larger narratives. Namely, researchers have studied some teachers' classroom stories as "counterstories" to larger narratives, or ways of solving problems at work while contributing to identity formation, sometimes allowing teachers a sense of success in resistance to the narratives that implicate their roles and actions (Lortie, 1975; Downey, 2015).

However, the larger, society-level narratives and discourses cannot be said to exist fully external from the teacher, unilaterally influencing the individual and shaping their own self-concept. According to Biklen (1995), "The cultural construction of teachers gets accomplished not only by the attribution of meanings *to* teachers, but also *by* the teachers themselves. Through their talk, teachers continually interpret what it means to be a teacher" (p.143). This is a critical piece of theory driving my project—the teacher's role as an actor in social discourses is crucial to understanding and analyzing their personal experiences and identities within, against, and through the social discourse.

Hansen (1995) presents one way in which teachers can interact with larger discourses that implicate their career and find meaning: through the concept of teaching as "vocation." He describes vocation "as a form of public service that yields enduring personal fulfillment to those who provide it" (Hansen, 1995, p. xiii) and argues that the concept "sheds light on why they continue to teach, and with conviction and success, despite the difficulties and challenges they and their colleagues everywhere face in today's schools" (Hansen, 1995, p. xiii). Hansen's concept of vocation emerges in multiple areas of my analysis of these teachers' descriptions of their work, especially in the context of their motivations for becoming teachers, their feelings of singularity, their

conceptualizations of their rewards, their desire to work in different contexts, and, as I will conclude this thesis, their motivations for emphasizing certain forms of their labor.

One of the most influential works I utilized in my research, and in educational research at large, is Lortie's seminal study on teachers, Schoolteacher (1975). Lortie presents several theoretical elements that are crucial to my analyses of teacher interviews in this thesis. First of all, Lortie cites five major "themes" that attract individuals to the profession of teaching. Especially important in my thesis are "the service theme" (p. 28) and "continuation theme" (p. 29), which become relevant in Chapter 1, as well as the "material benefits" theme (p. 30) and "theme of time compatibility" (p. 31), which become relevant in Chapter 2. Further, Lortie produced a substantial body of work on the significant influence former teachers on beginning/current teachers, and how being a student is and is not like being an apprentice in education; these will be especially important in my exploration of continual aspects of the teaching profession in Chapter 2.

Finally, the concept of immaterial labor is essential to my analysis throughout this thesis. Of the multiple kinds of immaterial labor that create intangible products of "ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion" (Hardt & Negri, 2001, p. 292), I will work primarily with the concepts of affective labor and care labor.[2] In their descriptions of their work, we see teachers point to their affective and care labor in the ways in which they attempt to affect the personal experience and affect of their students through their work in the classroom. Students are the focus of this form of labor, not any other person or object in the classroom.

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[2] I do not make a distinction between affective labor and care labor, as I feel that the definition of and literature on both concepts encapsulate the mode of immaterial labor with which I engage in this thesis. I will use primarily the term "affective labor" in my own analysis, but will use the terms that specific resources use.

This affective labor or care work is distinct from the care present in a relationship that is not institutionalized or professionalized (such as a familial or romantic relationship) in that the performance of the labor is unidirectional, and that relationship is not an end in itself, but a means to the end of learning. In their relationship-building and performance of affective labor, these teachers are aiming to fulfill greater objectives of student learning and success; we will see this emerge especially in the context of teachers' goals and measurements of success in Chapter 1. Within anthropology, the concept of care labor provides a way of looking at the "distribution of gendered… care… of younger, dependent members of society" (Alber & Drotbohm, 2015, p.1-2). Benoit and Hallgrimsdottir (2011) posit that "Care work has always been gendered work" (p. 3). As industrialization augmented the separation of public and private spheres of production, the private sphere became "a women's sphere, and a site of non-economic, non-instrumental activities" (Benoit & Hallgrimsdottir, 2011, p. 3) in which the performance of care labor became gendered, and eventually, devalued as a result of this gendering (Benoit & Hallgrimsdottir, 2011, p. 4). Teaching is a profession in which its actors are expected to publicly perform this type of labor that is primarily segregated to the private sphere; and while other professionals—such as nurses (Duffy, 2011; Hardt & Negri, 2001)—are also expected to perform this kind of labor, teaching is a unique case of the performance of affective labor in the extraordinarily public nature of the position (Biklen, 1995). Throughout this thesis, the ways in which my interlocutors prioritize discussion of their affective/care labor can be seen as the public reclamation of a historically private and gendered labor. As we will see, the prioritization of this particular form of labor is played out in *interviews*, not observed in the classroom setting; thus, the teachers are making a deliberate rhetorical choice to elevate affective labor in their descriptions of their work, and I believe this choice is

especially important in understanding how teachers think and talk about their work in the classroom.

It is important to remember that the emotional work involved in affective labor is not inherently detrimental to its performers' well-being (Benoit & Hallgrimsdottir, 2011). Throughout this thesis, we will see that these teachers find their performance of affective labor to be a significant element of their career and finding fulfillment in that career. However, the performance of affective labor in the educational context is not without its nuances and difficulties. The framework of teachers' time and labor can be conceptualized as "thought-time," signifying that "teaching… requires an open-ended structure of time free from externally imposed routines and deadlines" (Noonan, 2016, p. 214). This is in contrast to a structure of "money-time" in other careers that is framed around the potential for monetized productivity (Noonan, 2016). Within a system that increasingly numericizes education through the promotion of the school as a neoliberal institution (Urciuoli, 2010), one must consider the ways in which teachers' labor is subject to constant demand, and how this may affect their conception of their career and their personal wellbeing.

On the subject of using ethnography to investigate the ways in which the school functions as a neoliberal institution, Urciuoli writes, "The particular value of ethnographically embedded discourse analysis is its capacity to demonstrate specific ways in which neoliberalism has settled into place and established itself as the way things are, saturating contemporary academic beliefs and practices." (Urciuoli, 2010, p. 176). Though his writing predates the full embodiment of neoliberalism in our public institutions, Lortie touches on the significance of the public school system within the larger structures of monetization and power in our society: "Public schools shape our young and influence their life chances. Elementary and secondary schools consume billions of dollars each year

and employ one-quarter of the nation's public servants… Public schools, in short, are among our major social, economic, and political institutions" (Lortie, 1975, xvii). Urciuoli's (2010) framework of investigating the school as a neoliberal institution serves as a way of looking at the structural ways that the education system shape teachers' understanding of their work and their lives that will be important to the analysis of teachers' place within the educational system, as well as the way their time and value is presented.

Background

Historical Processes Affecting the Esteem of Teachers

An understanding of the historical forces that shaped the esteem of the profession is critical to understanding the current esteem of teaching and teachers, and to analyzing how my interlocutors interpret and interact with that esteem. Extensive work has been done to research and write about historical processes in education, especially two concomitant developments, feminization and professionalization of teaching.

Feminization is the process of constructing teaching as a female occupation, and has affected teaching and teachers since the mid-nineteenth century (Rury, 1989). In the past, women were often drawn to teaching as they faced limited career options. Teaching became constructed as "women's work" and "domestic," as it was associated with childcare (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Herbst (1991) observes that for recruitment of female teachers in the nineteenth century, the aspect of service to society was deemphasized, and teaching was painted "as an opportunity graciously offered to them" (Herbst, 1991, p. 28), as their experience with children would yield benefits to their own children, and to their husbands. As a result of this feminization, Biklen (1995) argues that teaching has come to be constructed around a particularly demanding and gendered "understanding of women's loyalties and time" (Biklen, 1995, p. 6). A primary effect of

this process of feminization alongside the segregation of care labor to the private sphere is the overall devaluation of teaching and affective labor as feminized modes of work.

The second major process, professionalization, decentralizes female teachers. In fact, the process of professionalizing education during the nineteenth century arguably left female teachers to the wayside, in favor of the professionalization, promotion, and greater monetary compensation of (primarily male) administrators and "experts" in education, presumed to have greater expertise than teachers (Lortie, 1975). As a result, Herbst (1991) argues for the presence of "one major defect [in the field and professionalization of teaching]: the denial of truly professional consideration for teachers" (p. 197). The current status of teaching as a profession has consequently suffered. As Herbst insists, training as it exists currently does not prepare teachers to perform as competent professionals; this phenomenon, combined with the high demand for teachers, leads to low barriers of entry for teachers (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003), and has developed a reputation of teaching as a refuge for ordinary and apathetic individuals (Biklen, 1995).

As we can see, classroom teachers maintain a historically "shadowed," "ambiguous," (Lortie, 1975, p. 10) and a "precarious professional standing" (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). In other words, occupy an enigmatic position in our society. While teachers are marginalized in terms of professional respectability, most people recognize their significant role in the lives of young people and in our culture (Rury, 1989). One factor that may contribute this phenomenon is the peculiar position of the teacher as an intensely public and memorable figure. Every person who has participated in schooling in the United States has experienced thousands of hours in the presence of teachers, closely observing and interpreting their work. This leads to a sort of apprentice-like experience and familiarity with the experience of teaching. As it figures prominently in our childhoods,

teachers' work, whether positively or negatively, is unquestionably central to our lives (Biklen, 1995). This intensely personal interaction with teaching, however, is affected by external dynamics, as "their lack of occupational status and power affects how the public knows and characterizes them" (Biklen, 1995, p. 15). Hofstadter (1963) describes the views of many American adolescents toward their teachers: "They know that their teachers are ill-paid and they are quick to agree that teachers should be better paid. The more ambitious and able among them also conclude that schoolteaching is not for them" (Hofstadter, 1963, p. 312). These sentiments reflect some of my own feelings as a gifted high school student with reverence for my teachers and their work, who felt guided away from the profession of teaching toward something with a more elite standing and higher pay—namely medicine and law—which, not coincidentally, are the careers most frequently compared to teaching in discussion of prestige and pay (e.g. Lortie, 1975; Rury, 1989; Herbst, 1991; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Teacher Career Motivations and Rewards

Every teacher has their own reasons for entering the profession. A person's decision to become a teacher represents the application of their individual agency in the context of particular cultural expectations and understandings of careers and teaching. In a study of Oaxacan teachers, Howell (1997) examines their career motivations, and how their personal agency interacts with economic factors, cultural expectations, and the esteem of the career. Howell finds that a variety of factors influence teachers' career motivations, in patterns similar to those in the United States. Of the factors that influence an individual's decision to become a teacher, the existing literature suggests that some of the principal influences include: family and socioeconomic class background (Howell, 1997; Ortner, 2003), the cultural esteem of the teacher (which will be discussed in the subsequent

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section), and financial and non-financial rewards (Howell, 1997; Carter, 1989). I will be looking at my own interlocutors' paths to teaching more deeply in an effort to understand their motivations for teaching, their goals for the profession, and how they conceptualize their labor.

Financially, teaching is typically thought of as an underpaid, under-resourced, underrewarded profession (Lortie, 1975). In the context of these perceived drawbacks, Carter (1989) investigates how schools are able to continually and successfully recruit teachers to fill open positions. Carter insists that while some individuals may be "born teachers" (people who would be drawn to teaching regardless of the financial benefits), many individuals are drawn by financial motivations. So, the question remains: how have schools been able to recruit teachers (and good teachers, at that), given the limited financial rewards? The answer, Carter argues, lies in the rewards relative to those available elsewhere; in other words, the relative availability of other career options to potential teachers. Historically, schools have recruited and hired individuals—namely, women and People of Color—for whom other career opportunities have been limited (Carter, 1989; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Today, there are significantly more career options available to these historically marginalized groups, while historical concerns (such as low pay and poor working conditions) still exist; yet, people continue to enter the profession and fill open teaching positions (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Thus, what I wanted to understand further is what draws people into the profession today and keeps them there.

One proposed answer lies in the non-financial, emotional, and other rewards that are available to teachers, and I find that this is the case with many of my interlocutors. Numerous scholars (e.g. Lortie, 1975; Downey, 2015) have noted the "*psychic rewards*" of teaching, which are benefits related to the emotional and service-related aspects of the

job, including the satisfaction of imparting knowledge upon and seeing improvement and learning in one's students. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) find that the teachers they interviewed often find teaching to be personally rewarding, but report that these personal rewards are undermined by the poor financial rewards. In my interviews, I initially wanted to look directly at psychic rewards as my interlocutors see them (whether they relate to, overcome, or are limited by financial rewards), and how these factor into their own career decisions and ideas about teaching. Ultimately, my interviews and analysis did not yield any meaningful explicit comparison that would produce answers to this question of "overcoming" the potentially lacking financial rewards. The way my interlocutors understood and talked about their financial and nonfinancial rewards were indeed connected, but instead of explicitly weighing or measuring them against each other, teachers made connections emphasizing the relational aspects of their career, especially the affective labor.

Arguments

My argument follows accordingly: My interlocutors most highly prioritize their affective labor and their relationships with students. They do so through their descriptions of their motivations, goals and definitions of success (Chapter 1), their conceptualization of their rewards (Chapter 2), and their view of their place within the school system (Chapter 3). In light of the feminized nature of affective labor, my interlocutors' emphasis of this form of labor can be seen as a significant choice to claim their performance of this labor within the context of larger narratives that implicate their work. These findings are significant to our understanding of teachers and their work, providing a window into what provides teachers with fulfillment in their careers, and how we can better support their labor for improved student outcomes and decreased teacher burnout.

In Chapter 1, I will lay out the student-centeredness of teachers' work, and how my interlocutors prioritize the personhood of and service for their students within their concepts of career motivations, goals, definitions of success, and way they view their role in the lives of students. Chapter 2 addresses the financial and non-financial compensation that teachers receive, how they talk about and connect these two categories of rewards, and how their discussion of rewards frequently pivots back to rewards that relate to students and the performance of affective labor. In Chapter 3, I look at teachers' critiques of aspects of the structure of the schooling system that place constraints upon their ability to perform labor and affect students in the ways that they consider most significant. Finally, the conclusory chapter will address the larger implications of my findings, and the appendix includes further questions and potential theoretical threads and areas of research that are beyond the scope of this paper, but are relevant and could be investigated further elsewhere.

Chapter 1: Teachers' Conceptualizations of their Work as Student-Centered

Common sense may indicate the priority of different parts of teachers' job descriptions over others, such as the conveying of content knowledge or solely academic learning; however, my interlocutors' narratives of their own work prioritize the relational elements and affective labor of their work, even considering these student-centered aspects to be foundational to other aspects of their career. It is possible that in these interviews, teachers took for granted, or chose not to emphasize academic- or content-focused aspects of their work with students because, again, common sense might say that delivery of content knowledge is a significant portion of what teachers do in the classroom. Further, it is also possible that the affective labor and relationships with students that they emphasize to me is *not* something they prioritize in the classroom over academic learning; in this research, rather than drawing primarily from observations of these teachers' classrooms, I conducted interviews, a format which gives my interlocutors the opportunity to choose what elements of their work they emphasize to me, the anthropologist. What is important here is understanding that of all of the elements of their career they could highlight in our interview, most of these teachers consistently chose to emphasize the student-centered aspects of their work: affective labor and relationships with students.

Some of the most telling components of my interlocutors' understanding of their work as student-centered were their discussions of: a) their motivations for becoming a teacher, b) their goals as a teacher, c) their definitions of success, followed by d) their descriptions of the affective care labor they perform. Taken together, these elements reveal the parts of their role as teachers they consider most significant and rewarding, as they tell me their goals and the kinds of work they perform for their students in order to achieve these definitions of success. In this chapter, I will begin to explore the many ways in which

my interlocuters prioritized student-centered aspects of their careers in our interviews. I start by exploring my interviewees' descriptions of their path to becoming a teacher, what they cite as their "goals," or what they are most trying to achieve as teachers; then I will look at how my interlocutors define "success," taking these definitions as one way that teachers develop meaning within their career and measure whether they have achieved their stated goals. Further, I will analyze the relational elements which teachers prioritize in their descriptions of their work, which can be seen as the affective/care work they perform toward achieving the student-centered goals for which they aim. Finally, I look at an intriguing theme concerning teachers' descriptions of feeling as if they are the only teacher filling a particular role in the school and in a student's life—what I call, *feelings of singularity*. This will reveal concerning elements about the school structure and teachers' primary focus on relationships with students.

Motivations for Becoming a Teacher

When I asked my interlocutors to describe their path to becoming a teacher, their narrative descriptions often revealed their primary reasons for entering the profession of teaching; thus, the teachers indicated to me their underlying motivations for choosing to teach. Many of these career motivations focused on the centrality of students and the service[3] element to the career. The service element is not universal, but emphasized by many teachers (including most of my interlocutors) as a primary element of their personal valuation of their career. My interlocutors reference many aspects of this "service," in the ways they understand their career as helping others (not purely for the purpose of making money for themselves or anybody for that matter), focusing on the other individuals'

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[3] In some fields, including education, "service" is distinct from its implications in "service industry" and "service labor." Instead of a focus on *serving* others, as in a position as a waiter or salesperson, Lortie's definition of this theme highlights the teacher's role in *helping* others as *people*—that is, one's students—as part of a "special mission" (Lortie, 1975, p.28).

outcomes instead of their own; basically, helping and serving individuals other than themselves. Foundational to this understanding of service in teaching is the teacher's sense of "a certain degree of efficacy" (Lortie, 1975, p. 29) in their work. Thus, as my interlocutors reference service elements of their career in the coming pages, we know that this implies a feeling of effectiveness, that they are accomplishing something with the students they serve. This sense of service, in many instances, the teacher's sense of vocation in the choice to teach students. Instead of conceptualizing the career of teaching as "simply a choice among the array of jobs available in society" (Hansen, 1995, p. 9), the vocational understanding of teaching evokes the decision to teach as a very intentional and meaningful development in their life.

Initially, I tried to organize teachers' interest in teaching into the order in which they approached the subject versus the profession. However, these initial analyses oversimplified the complexities of my interlocutors' motivations to teach. Some teachers did not have a clear initial reason based solely in content or in the act of teaching itself. In fact, my interlocutors' primary motivations for becoming a teacher were varied and complex, and primarily focused on student-centered elements of the career. Many of my interlocutors were attracted to teaching in large part due to the strong emphasis upon working with a younger generation of individuals. Some had experiences working with kids in the past, like the choir teacher at North Shore High School, Ms. Gene, who had helped younger children with music in high school, and Mr. Bradford, a young and enthusiastic English teacher at Oak Ridge High School, who worked at a local youth club in college. While it seems predictable or "given" that a large part of public school teaching is working with students younger than the teacher, the fact that teachers are especially drawn to a relationship with students that will impact a younger generation is non-trivial.

In fact, Mr. Davison, an English educator who has worked as a teacher and coach at Oak Ridge for twelve years, believes that working with kids is one of the *main* reasons that teachers join the career: "I think what draws most people to the career is just they love kids and want to help kids. There's always people that have other random reasons, but that's the biggest part. If they want to work with kids and see kids succeed, whatever that success… is." Clearly, the desire to work with young people is a significant element of many, even most of my interlocutors' career motivations, and will become important throughout the course of their career and labor. Mr. Davison's comment in particular brings to light the significance of this element in the outward expression of teachers' motivations to teach. His observation about "other random reasons" serves as a direct response to implications of teachers' career as "easy" or a choice for those who "don't know what else to do." Instead, Mr. Davison believes that teachers are motivated by a desire to help children, and the service-related testimonies of my other interlocutors support this conclusion.

The service element (Lortie, 1975), as first presented in the introductory chapter, is another major motivator and highly-valued element of the teaching career for many of my interlocutors. Ms. Alvarez, a warm and inviting Spanish teacher from North Shore High School, cites the service element, as related by Lortie (1975), as one of the major influences on her decision to become a teacher, saying, "I felt I could help others. It was a big satisfaction I got out of it." Further, other teachers tell me that they sought a career that would be "meaningful," and that they highly value this aspect of their work. This concept of meaning directly relates to Hansen's definition (1995) of vocation in that it implies a deeper connection to or understanding of the context in which the teachers' work affects

others, thus creating for these teachers an understanding of the significance of their work to themselves and others.

Teachers who have experienced work in other careers, particularly in the private sector, especially emphasize the ways in which teaching differs from other careers and forms of labor in its impetuses to help, benefit, and affect others; they thus derive greater "meaning" from their work than they would in a profit-focused career. Mr. Thomas, a science teacher at Oak Ridge High School who was previously in the military, was drawn to teaching because of its meaningfulness, saying that it was the most important factor in his decision to become a teacher: "there was other options that paid more… but I've done enough play things that I enjoy. But something that there's an impact, kind of that sense of meaning at the end of the day, that was the primary piece." Mr. Cantona, a fairly new teacher who shifted his career from the private sector to teaching at Jameson, also said that he tired of marketing because it "didn't matter," that he derives fulfillment, meaning, and even happiness from being a part of something (teaching) that matters and is important, and says, "I've just learned that I'm happier when I'm doing something that I think matters, like is really vitally important." A seasoned United States History teacher at Jameson High School who is nearing retirement, Mr. Galt told me that when he retires, he plans to continue in education in some capacity. Mr. Galt cites his reason behind this decision to continue in education as the satisfaction he receives in sticking to it, and that "you have to believe at some level that you're making a difference. You have to believe at some level you're making a contribution." Clearly, the service or meaning aspect of teaching part of his understanding of his own career, and is a large part of his decision to continue teaching. Not only is the feeling of contribution important to Mr. Galt's conceptualization of his career, but he considers it *crucial* to the work. Perhaps a follow-up question could have

ironed out this ambiguity: is he arguing that all teachers must have a sense of contribution to do a good job? Is he implying that the draining aspects require a sense of contribution to move forward and feel accomplished in his career? The following analysis of his and others' comments on their goals and definitions of success may lend greater insight to the feelings of contribution in teachers' work.

Teachers' Goals and Successes: Student-Centeredness of Teachers' Aims

Concomitantly with their motivations, teachers' career goals illuminate the primary impetuses for effort in their career. This section will explore my interlocutors' goals which, as we will see, are significantly student-focused in nature, and often shift the focus from their own goals to goals that prioritize students and their respective objectives.

Many of these teachers expressed goals are directly related to their valuations of their relationships with, and impact upon students. For example, many of my interlocutors emphasize student experiences as one of their major goals. Ms. Gene explicitly states that she hopes to facilitate "positive experiences through music" in her choir classroom and prioritizes this goal in her teaching. Mr. Cameron, a passionate English teacher at North Shore High School hopes that his students discover something in his class that they did not know, *even if it is not academic*. It is noteworthy that Mr. Cameron specifies that what the student learns does not necessarily have to be academic; by minimizing the supremacy of academic learning and growth in his classroom, Mr. Cameron opens the conceptual possibilities of classroom learning to personal and "life lessons." In a way, this prioritizes his efforts focused on the *students* and their individual needs and progress, and in effect downplays the content-delivery and academic aspects of the relationship between student and teacher. Again, this is not to say that the teachers ignore academic learning to the advantage of relational aspects of teacher-student relations in the classroom. Instead, this

is one of the ways in which teachers emphasize in their interviews the transformative learning experiences, founded in relationships and teachers' affective labor, that they find important in their classroom. In effect, they are not downplaying or ignoring academics as much as prioritizing the affective labor and relationships with students that they so value. These relationships can be seen as a *means to an end*—building relationships to facilitate these academic learning experiences. Clearly, this connection between academic and non-academic encounters in the classroom between student and teacher, especially a prioritization of non-academic relationships, denotes the significance of the student-teacher relationship in these teachers' conceptualization of their role in the classroom.

Some teachers envision a particular attitude which they aspire to express to their students, indicating a proclivity to performing labor that cultivates particular feelings and experiences for their students, a classic demonstration of affective labor. Ms. Frizzle and Mr. Atom, both teachers of advanced science classes at Jameson and North Shore, respectively, state a desire to "convey the attitude that 'you can do this.'" This attitude parallels another objective that Ms. Frizzle and Mr. Galt indicated in their interviews: they want to help their student reach their goals, or accomplish that which they did not know were possible. By stating that they hope to help students reach their goals, these teachers make *students' goals* their own. In this way, the aims of their work are notably student-oriented, taking the focus away from themselves and placing it squarely on their conceptions of their work with and effect upon students.

Teachers express related goals regarding who their students become as people, indicating a clear focus of teacher efforts upon the student as a person beyond the classroom. Ms. Frizzle and Mr. Thomas hope to help their students become "critical thinkers," and Mr. Galt and Mr. Hundley (a committed social studies teacher at Oak Ridge

High School) hope to cultivate their students into "citizens" as part of their role as teachers. This is especially notable in the sense that these comments emphasize the future of the students, unrelated to their academic- or career-related self, but instead focusing on the personal character and accomplishments of the student. A desire to affect who the student becomes beyond their classroom implies that these teachers have insight into the potential effects of teacher upon student. They hope to shape their relationship into a positive educational encounter, while helping students grow to the teacher's vision of positive individuals.

Definitions and Measurements of Situated Success

Next, we will look to my interlocutors' definitions of success, a culmination of their various concepts of career motivations, goals and relationships in their work with students. We find that many of these definitions are directly related to the immaterial labor they perform, and the relationships they build with students in their career, and thus evoke the affective aspects of their labor. When I asked teachers, "what does success mean to you," I was, in a way, asking them to suggest markers that indicate when they achieved their goals, or reached a sense of satisfaction in their life and career. Thus, the following exploration of my interlocutors' definitions of success brings to light what elicits or indicates these teachers' sense of satisfaction, and how they conceptualize achievement in their career. I believe that the ambiguity of the term, "success," that I allowed in the interview lent itself the diversity of content among my interlocutors' answers.[4] Mr. Hundley, for instance, asked what I meant by "success," asking, "personal, or...?" and I

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[4] It is possible that the timing of this question of success within interviews (especially what question/answer came before this question) may have influenced teachers' answer as to their definitions of success. However, I believe that teachers had the rhetorical space (provided by the semistructured interview format and my refusal to define ambiguous terms for them) to take the direction they felt most relevant and important to their own ideas of their career

simply said, "just however you define it"; he went on to give an answer that addressed his own personal valuation of success, without my narrowing of the question to career, life, students, etc.

While one teacher makes a brief comment connecting success to financial compensation (saying that he would like a little more money in his bank account for travel), more teachers make clear statements that their definitions of success are *not* related money. For example, Ms. Alvarez desires more *recognition* for her work as a teacher, not more money. She recognizes the lack of prestige and verbal appreciation for her work, and states her desire for it directly in contrast to a desire for greater financial compensation. Mr. Franklin, an advanced mathematics teacher at Oak Ridge, states that for him, "success never has anything to do with the amount of money you make. But doing a job and feeling good about how you do it." As we have seen, and will continue to see throughout this thesis, a large part of what makes these teachers feel fulfilled in their career is the personal connection with and impact they have upon their students, which is achieved through their exertion of considerable affective labor.

As with the questions of motivations and goals, teachers demonstrated a continual focus on the successes that relate to their students. While some teachers did indicate their own personal goals, many of the conversations continually came back to measures of success related to their students, and definitions of success *for their students*. Mrs. McQueen disambiguates between her definition of success and a student-related success that would be defined solely based on the student's performance on a test, instead insisting that student valuation of her work indicates her feeling of success. She says, "if I'm looking for success, I look for it from the kids. And not just did their test score come out well, but did they walk away thinking you were a good teacher. If a kid tells me I'm a good teacher,

or if a kid at the end of a class says thank you, then I think I've succeeded." Here, her measurement is a form of external validation that comes directly from a student. In this case, the student's verbal recognition of the teacher and their subjective validation is a greater measure of success than the student's numerical outcome on a standardized test, and how that can implicate a teacher.[5]

When asked how he defined success, Mr. Davison automatically defined success for his students, not for himself. Mr. Davison's vision of success for his students is also relative and subjective, representing different notions of success for each student. He does not impose a single measurement of accomplishment (passing the AP exam, getting into college, getting a certain grade, etc.), but understands the individual abilities and experiences of his students and incorporates this knowledge into his answer. He responds, "I think they get to define their own success. You know, for one kid, a C is a reason for celebration. Whereas other kids, an A- is 'I'm gonna lock myself in my house for two weeks and study.' And so I think the kids being satisfied with what their success is— setting, if they set goals and meet those goals, to me those are success within themselves." In his interview, Mr. Davison's conceptualization of success does not focus on his own achievements, or even on one particular kind of achievement, but a range of subjective possibilities to be achieved by his students. Success, for him, is translated from success for his students, thus driving the impetus of his work and focus of his energies as a teacher.

Roles and Labor of Teachers to Achieve these Goals

Now we turn to a foundational element of how teachers conceptualize their role in the classroom, the underlying emphasis of teachers work toward these student-centered

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[5] See discussion of standardized testing and the numerical valuation of a teachers' work, along with Mr. Bradford's comments on teachers being blamed for unfortunate outcomes on student exams in Chapter 3.

goals: relationships with students. For some teachers, relationships are even of greater importance than, or are foundational to some of the academic elements of teaching. This section explores the significant theme of relationships in the profession of teaching that lends itself further to conversation about teachers' performance and emphasis of affective labor.

When asked, "what kinds of knowledge are necessary to do a good job of teaching of the kind that you do?," the majority of the teachers that I interviewed give an answer that represents some variation of the elements, a) content knowledge, and b) knowledge of relationships/working with kids. I was astounded that nearly every single teacher's responses followed this pattern exactly. This is an especially crucial point; not only do teachers value their relationships and knowledge of working with children/students, but a substantial portion of my interlocutors value these kinds of professional and personal knowledges of their career highly enough to state them as one of the two most crucial things they must know as a teacher.

Further, many interlocutors comment on the dynamic or connection *between* their relationships with, and the content they convey to their students, thus relating the two forms of knowledge they deem most important to their position as teacher. Some insist that relationships and content are inextricably linked. One way in which some teachers elicit this connection between relationships and content is claiming that an understanding of one's students and building relationships with them is *foundational* to teaching and learning. For example, Mrs. McQueen, the English teacher at Jameson High School whose loving but sassy attitude shows through in her daily interactions with students, asserts that "if you can't build a relationship, if they can't relate to you, nothing else you do is [unintelligible]… Make relationship, and then bring the content in." When Mr. Thomas

had issues with some of his students in his student teaching position, his mentor teacher suggested "this idea of going and checking in, like, 'hey how's your day going?' and all that. And it's just like these thirty seconds and then the entire day would be different. It's like the idea that they cared… The relationships, that is—to me that's foundational. If I don't have that, no learning." Mr. Thomas' experiences have led him to understand relational aspects of his work with students to be foundational to other aspects of their interactions in the classroom. Mr. Bradford further insists that you can't help but teach life along with the academic content, implying themes (to be addressed in the subsequent paragraphs) of the notion of inevitability of mentorship in teaching, and how that is inextricably tied with the content-delivery and learning inherent in his role as teacher and interactions with students.

Mentorship is a significant mode of the relationship between student and teacher, according to my interlocutors. As we will see, I deliberately allowed the term "mentorship" to have ambiguous meanings in my interview questions, to allow teachers to define the term for themselves and to discuss the concept as it related to their own work and relationships with students. Mr. Bradford provides interesting comments about his ideas of mentorship that provide a jumping off point for a variety of recurring themes. When asked whether he considers himself a mentor to his students, he responds emphatically, "*Yes.* I'd rather be that. Like that's what I value—the personal conversations, the—you know, when a kid comes to me …that means I know I've built that trust. So I love being a mentor to my kids." I asked him what kinds of mentorship he provides to his students, and he describes his mentorship relationship with students as,

> In whatever way they feel like they need it. Like I'll never push it on a kid… But whether that's, they want me to be an academic mentor, they want me to help their

growth as a reader or as a writer, I'm all for that. If they need me as a mentor in juggling, say, their—like I had a kid this year, really had a hard time with their parents… So if it's that—you know I've had everything from 'I don't know how to break up with my girl—' You know, if a kid trusts me enough, I'll respect that and try to help them in whatever avenue it is that they want help in…."

These comments highlight a variety of themes within the topic of mentorship, which I will address in the order in which Mr. Bradford presents them.

To begin with, Mr. Bradford explicitly articulates that he highly values the aspect of mentorship in his relationships with students, thus underscoring the significance of relational aspects of teaching addressed in this chapter. Students often come to Mr. Bradford with personal issues in their lives, which gives Mr. Bradford positive feelings, not because he finds pleasure his students' misfortune, but because there is a degree of trust inherent in their request for advice and support, and he greatly values this trust. These elements are not predicated or dependent upon the academic-, content-related aspects of his career, but are not necessarily in opposition to them either. As Mr. Bradford will go on to insist, his mentorship will follow whatever avenue his students request, and thus follow academic and/or personal paths, which are not mutually exclusive.

Mr. Bradford states that he will provide mentorship in whatever avenue his students need, and that he does not thrust mentorship on his students, but lets his students take the initiative. Many of my interlocutors similarly emphasize student initiation and direction for the mentorship they provide. This point is especially crucial in that these teachers insinuate their prioritization of student needs and requests over their own vision of what mentorship could be. Thus, their model of mentorship is student-driven, and not necessarily what the teacher may anticipate in a situation. Some students request mentorship in personal aspects

of their life, while others desire academic support. Originally, I intended my analysis of mentorship to focus on college and career mentorship, as I was initially interested in how teachers passed on ideologies about careers and labor to their students, as a result of my own experience with the teacher (mentioned in the introductory chapter's vignette) who discouraged me from becoming a teacher. I wanted to know how teachers conceptualized labor and career values and how they conveyed them to their students, because I felt that my personal experience with his teacher was confusing, yet intriguing. And while a few teachers do say that they provide some college and career mentorship to their students, overall, this theme of college and career mentorship became much less prominent than emergent themes of emotional, moral and personal mentorship—as has been the case throughout most of the analysis in this thesis. For instance, Ms. Gene provides emotional, moral mentorship to her students in times of disappointment by recounting her own experiences of similar emotions, in an attempt to help students reframe negative experiences into positive life lessons.

Some teachers insisted that this mentorship is a crucial, even inherent aspect of being a teacher. As exemplified above by Mr. Bradford's comments, he clearly considers mentorship the most important role he fills as a teacher. Mr. Davison similarly expresses that being a role model and mentor to his students is his most important responsibility as well. Some interlocutors, such as Mr. Bradford in his comments on mentorship recorded above, go further, contending that mentorship is an inherent element of their role as teacher. When, for example, Mr. Hundley was asked whether he considers himself a mentor, he responded, "I don't really try to cultivate it, I think it's just part and parcel of the job." Parallel to the comments about letting students guide the sort of mentorship the teacher provides, this idea that Mr. Hundley does not "cultivate" the mentorship role means that

he is not necessarily shaping that role to fit his personal ideas of mentorship, but allowing the inherent nature of the role, along with the forms of mentorship students request, shape the student-teacher mentorship relations. Mrs. McQueen articulated similar sentiments about the integral nature of mentorship to the role of teaching: "But I don't even think it matters whether I consider myself a mentor, I think teachers are. You know, I think we're in a position of authority in an enclosed environment; and so automatically, most kids will look up to that." Here, Mrs. McQueen comments on the power dynamic between teacher and student, saying that students revere teachers and their guidance as a result of the authoritative position which teachers inhabit. Subsequently, she concludes, the teacher is automatically thrust into a position of mentorship, and must fulfill the expectations of affective labor to help and shape the student.

Finally, Mr. Cameron indicates the importance of mentorship to teaching and learning in the classroom through discussion of the wide range of topics in which he mentors students: "It's the full gamut. I mean, anything that the kid really has a problem with, to something that they're just curious about, or sometimes kids just want to talk about video games and books and movies and stuff. That's kind of the building block or the foundation for building relationships and getting to know kids beyond the four walls of your classroom." Mr. Cameron considers this recognition of his student's life outside of their role *as his student*, a significant part of his job. He says, "we all have—for lack of a better term—baggage that *does* play a factor in how well they're learning in your class."

Mr. Cameron's comment illuminates a significant conceptual point that permeated many of my interviews: teachers emphasize the importance of recognizing students' lives outside of the classroom. By acknowledging students' lives, experiences, and especially difficulties outside the classroom, teachers show that they care about their students beyond

their role as pupil. This means that teachers not only see their students as students—purely for their academic labor, marketable skills (Urciuoli, 2010), and potential as future laborers (Sleeter, 2011). Instead, teachers recognize their students beyond these limited, neoliberally-constructed definitions of their personhood, to what I call their *full personhood.*

Is this aspect of the teacher-student relationship reciprocal? Is the full personhood of the teacher recognized in the classroom? Are students specifically expected to recognize teachers' full personhood? Based on some of my interlocutors' comments about their relationships with students, it appears that their full personhood is *not* emphasized in the classroom. For example, Mr. Galt keeps his personal life so separate from his professional life, that when I asked him to provide some context on his family background, he respectfully declined to answer my question. Mr. Thomas, in distinguishing his teacher-student interactions from typical interactions between adults, says, "I'm not talking with them—it's not an equal ground. It's like, you're bringing all your problems to me, but I do not share my problems with you, you know. And so it's one-sided, and that's actually hard." Both of these teachers' decisions to keep personal and professional lives separate may represent sound choices to maintain a level of distance from students that ensures professionalism; nonetheless, the result is a sort of partitioning of the teacher's life in and out of the classroom that is not required of students.

On the other hand, a few teachers made brief comments that evince a call to recognize their full personhood. Mr. Atom, for instance, relates a negative occurrence and gives an explanation: "A kid doesn't have their work, and—hey, I'm a person, so I might be having a bad day, too—and 'Oh, didn't have your work, *again.*' You know, which is something I should never say. But you know what, hey, nobody's perfect and we have

those days." While Mr. Atom does not make clear whether he expresses his acceptance of his own imperfections in the classroom, this is clearly a recognition of his own personhood and flaws, and the ways in which that permeates his work in the classroom. Whether teachers' full personhood is or is not affirmed (by themselves or by students in the classroom), it is clear that there are many instances in which the full personhood of the teacher is not emphasized in the same ways in which students' identities and full personhood are recognized. This differential recognition of the personhood of the laborer versus the subject of the laborer indicates the significance of affective labor in disrupting the function of the school in the neoliberal "tool to shape workers for the global economy" (Sleeter, 2011, p. 19). By performing affective labor to recognize students' full personhood (even if that recognition is not reciprocated), teachers place value on their students that extends beyond the confines of the neoliberal standard in public schools. Further, this finding clearly reveals the focus of the teacher-student relationship as lying in the student and not the teacher—a clear manifestation of the performance of affective labor in the lives of the teacher and student.

Feelings of Singularity

Within teachers' descriptions of their affective labor and relationships with their students, another compelling—but perhaps concerning—conceptual thread emerged wherein many teachers expressed feeling that they were the only one filling a certain role in the school or in a student's life—what I call, *feelings of singularity.*

Three teachers, Ms. Frizzle, Mr. Franklin, and Mr. Galt, express feelings of singularity in the academic role they fill in their schools. Ms. Frizzle laments,

> I think our teachers are just not rigorous enough… I think the reality is that if you want kids to be prepared for college, you need to hold them accountable, you need

to go at a fast pace, you need to… You know there needs to be homework, the things that you would have to know how to do…based on what kids report to me about how hard my classes are, I'm gonna suggest that it's not happening in most classes.

Ms. Frizzle considers certain aspects of school as critical to helping students lay the groundwork for college and life, and she believes that students are not necessarily getting this sort of preparation in other classes. However, in recognition of the importance of this preparation and not seeing other teachers fulfilling it, Ms. Frizzle makes it a priority in her own classes. For instance, when asked what kind of reputation she wants to have with her students, Ms. Frizzle says she wants to be the "hard, ethical teacher," and that she often has students reminisce that her class was the hardest in high school, but that it prepared them for a variety of challenges they face in college. Thus, Ms. Frizzle acknowledges an issue in her school, works to address it in her own classroom, and subsequently recognizes her own singularity in addressing this issue in her school.

In his explanation of why he has only taken on one student teacher, Mr. Franklin expounds that his subjects (pre-calculus and calculus) are "pretty high-level classes, and you don't want someone who's gonna come in and it halfway." He says, "we got enough teachers that do that, we don't need student teachers doing it too." Clearly, Mr. Franklin guides some choices in his career based on an understanding of other teachers not meeting standards that he holds for himself and other teachers, and that he feels he is meeting, and thus views himself as filling a role in his students' lives that others do not fill.

Mr. Galt describes himself as distinct from the other teachers in his school and district, thus fulfilling different roles in the classroom than other teachers. In fact, he cites this as one of his reasons for wanting to stay active in education after retirement: "For a

person like myself, who is not necessarily in the intellectual mainstream of American academia or American teaching profession, there's a certain kind of… you know, I'm kind of afraid of turning my classroom over to…[laughs]." Mr. Galt spends time in multiple parts of the interview making sure that I have other cases to base my research on, because he maintains that he is "not typical," and does not want to "skew [my] thinking process" as I move forward with my analysis. Mr. Galt's feeling of being atypical and outside the mainstream represents an extreme example of the theme of expressed singularity or feeling as if they're the only one filling a role. He feels that if he does not fill this role, it is probable that no one else will. Mr. Galt takes this feeling of singularity further to experience and enjoy a certain degree of individualism, which he also considers unique from other teachers. While there are certain aspects of the career that necessitate collaboration ("sharing materials and so on"), he says that he typically tends more toward isolation than most teachers. He dictates: "I know what I want to do, and get out of my way." In other words, "I've seen teaching as an art, and don't mess with my art." Far from being a skewing force in my data, Mr. Galt and his austere individualism are fascinating and a notable example of a pattern emerging in my data, representing someone who sees themselves as exclusively singular in the school.

Apart from feeling as if they are the only one filling an academic role, some of the teachers I interviewed feel that they are the only individual filling a certain *emotional* or *relational* role in their students' lives. Bob Thomas explicitly expresses this theme—and many others—when asked about the non-financial rewards he receives for his work as a teacher:

So every year I buy a yearbook, put it out and [ask kids to] sign it at the end of the year…. But looking through those… what I saw… was the student talking about

the connection level. Like 'you actually knew what was going on with me more than any other teacher, … You cared. You helped.' Like I see all these things that—I guess what goes through my mind is why is it not happening in other classes? Like why—don't you have these relationships with other teachers? What we have, to me, should be fundamental, basic between teachers and students. And yet, you're telling me I'm the only person you have this relationship with, so. To me that's really meaningful… It's not about the grades, it's about the relationship. The learning involves into it, but how do you interact with people and all of that.

This passage elucidates a range of themes addressed so far in this paper, especially those that lend insight into teachers' understandings of their relationships with students.

To start, Mr. Thomas' comments reveal that he put effort into an aforementioned element of affective labor by recognizing what is going on in his students' lives outside of school. His students subsequently appreciated this effort and achievement. Taking it a step further, they say that he understood what was going on with his students *more than other teachers.* This already implies that Mr. Thomas recognizes a position of singularity among his fellow teachers at Oak Ridge. But not only is he potentially one of the only people filling this role in students' lives, he feels that *he should not be* the only one. He insists that a relationship that fosters a certain degree of understanding of students' lives outside of school should be *foundational* to the teacher-student relationship; this is underlined in his question as to why students do not experience this relationship with other teachers. Mr. Thomas goes on to directly contrast his relationships with his students to that with his own science teacher, reflecting the theme of teachers modelling their work in line with and/or against that of their former teachers, as will be discussed in Chapter 2 in the context of continual relationships between teachers and their former teachers. Finally, he returns to

the idea of relational aspects filling a fundamental role in teaching and learning, asserting that relationships are related to, even paramount over grades or academic aspects. Through Mr. Thomas' comments, we see how a discussion of the non-financial, psychic benefits teachers receive are related to a whole host of relational elements of their career, the should-be fundamentality of emotional and relational aspects of the teacher-student interactions, and the continuity of the effects of teacher-student relationships. The elucidation of these concepts through Mr. Thomas' discussion of non-financial benefits solidifies the connection between rewards and relationships, as well as elucidates the feelings of singularity in the school.

Mr. Bradford similarly feels singular in filling emotional roles in his teacher-student relationships. As we have already seen, he believes that mentorship in whatever capacity is the most important role that he plays as a teacher. When asked whether other teachers also do what he describes as mentorship (providing a positive example for students, being vulnerable and honest with them, etc.), he says,

> No. I mean, I think it's hard. I think a lot of teachers—I don't want to say 'abuse teaching,' but it's easy for them. It's easy to get into a routine of 'I'm going to show up at my time, I'm going to leave when my time's up. And I'll create this nice wall.' And it's always frustrated me when I see teachers that have that approach. And I think a lot more teachers are going there because they get drained. When they get drained, they just want it to be as easy as possible… And it kind of saddens me. Because I get why kids are burnt out, and I get why kids can walk into a room with a lot of distrust. Because it's very rare when they come across a teacher that really seems like they care a lot.

Here, Mr. Bradford recognizes the reason why other teachers, he believes, are not fulfilling a role he considers crucial to teaching: it is exhausting. While it may be the "easy" way or "path of least resistance," Mr. Bradford insists that when teachers do not fulfill the roles he considers most important in teaching, it is frustrating to him, as someone who *is* filling those roles. His response to my question demonstrates that he understands *why* other teachers are not filling the role, but still, his frustration is clear.

Mr. Thomas also laments that parts of the emotional role he fills in his students' lives can be exhausting. He says, "being present to" (i.e. hearing about, recognizing) the other issues that students have going on outside of school can take "an emotional toll" and be "exhausting." This is in part because students do not have "other supports." Mr. Thomas informs me, "Oak Ridge is the only high school in Tacoma that doesn't have counselors… they don't have psychiatric counsellors offered within the school. And so, you start filling that gap—which I'm happy to do, but it takes its toll." Here, he conceptualizes his role in hearing what students go through as necessarily "filling a gap." While he does not say that other teachers do not fill this gap as well, he implies that there is a necessity in his filling a role because there is no paid person in the school to fill that position, thus he feels he *must* attend to these student needs. Especially in consideration of the demand put on teachers in terms of their time and energy within the conception of thought-time (Noonan, 2015) and the potentially unlimited demand for affective labor, it is crucial to understand whether/how teachers feel obligations to certain roles, and how those roles affect their personal well-being. In this case, Mr. Thomas' exhaustion is indicative of the concerning aspects of the conceptual thread of singularity. Mr. Thomas seems to feel some obligation to fill this role *based on* his feelings of singularity.

Ultimately, it is not my task to determine whether teachers are or are not the only individual filling are particular role; this is conceptually dry and not important to my task at hand. Instead, this conceptual thread piqued my interest and directed my analytical attention to the question of the feedback mechanisms available to teachers, and how teachers' paths of personal fulfillment through relationships with students require exorbitant amounts of affective labor. Despite feelings of fulfillment, teachers feel pressured to perform this labor, lest no one else will. Teachers' satisfaction and value becomes tangible through students, through their focus on the one-on-one relationships they build with their students. Because this relationship is enacted only between the two actors, rather than in a student-centered relationship that is community-based (more than one teacher focusing attention and relationships on students) and situated in a larger context, a teacher's understanding of their performance of affective labor is limited to their own work and relationships with students. Isolated from the potential performance of that labor by other teachers, my interlocutors may develop these feelings of singularity. In a sense, this isolation of teachers in their relationships with students allows the structure of the school to rely upon the exertion of these teachers' affective labor, as teachers continue to feel pressure to perform that labor they consider so important—even if no one is explicitly forcing teachers to perform this work. And so the school benefits from the teachers' connections to students without necessarily adequately compensating them for this feminized form of labor. As we will see, the potentially unlimited nature of time and effort that could be exerted in affective labor can cause exhaustion and even burnout among teachers, but they feel they must continue the labor because, within these feelings of singularity, teachers feel that without their performance of this labor, it is unlikely that someone else in the school or in the student's life will continue to fill that role.

Chapter 2: Teachers' Conceptualization of the Rewards Received for their Labor

The rewards that teachers receive for their labor are significant to the way that the public, and teachers themselves, recognize the nature and esteem of the teaching profession. My interlocutors' discussion of the rewards they receive for their work is crucial to understanding teachers' interactions with and responses to the cultural esteem of their career, and their descriptions reveal the compensation and rewards they most highly value. In this chapter, I argue that teachers primarily emphasize the non-financial rewards they receive, and consistently bring the conversation back to student-related elements of their compensation.

Financial Compensation

Before looking at how teachers conceptualize their financial rewards, let us turn to the raw numbers on teacher salaries in the Tacoma Public School District. As of September of 2018, teachers experienced a 14.4% average pay raise as part of the resolution to a strike that occurred at the beginning of the school year (The News Tribune Editorial Board, 2018). Now, the base salary for an entry-level teacher is $54,308 (Robinson, 2018), and that figure increases based on further education, years of experience, and "additional time, responsibility, and incentive" (TRI)—money paid by the district to employees performing additional in order to attract and retain teachers work (Copeland, 2018). During the strike that brought this increase to the Tacoma teachers' pay scale, many teachers expressed sentiments of feeling devalued, underpaid, and underappreciated for their crucial work, and many community members agreed, expressing their support for the striking teachers (Driscoll, 2018; Robinson, 2018). Lortie describes teachers' position in the socioeconomic system, writing "It is conventional to connect the term 'middle class' with schoolteachers, and although that class is now so large as to reduce its descriptive value, it may have

particular usefulness in depicting this occupation" (Lortie, 1975, p. 13). Although teachers are not necessarily affluent, he writes, their middle-class standing is solidified through their ability to purchase certain commodities associated with comfortable middle-class living, such as homes and cars; the difference between teaching and many other middle-income careers is that teachers have "faint hope of economic breakthrough" (Lortie, 1975, p. 13).

As someone very familiar with common narratives of underpaid, overworked teachers, I expected my informants to primarily discuss the drawbacks of their financial compensation. However, this was not the case. Negative concepts of financial rewards *did* come up in our interviews, but *did not* constitute the focus of teachers' discussions of their financial compensation. For example, Ms. Gene, the choir teacher first introduced in Chapter 1, quickly answered that the monetary compensation she receives for her work is not adequate, given the amount of *time* she commits to her career both inside and outside the classroom. "Whereas academic teachers have a lot of papers to grade, I have a lot of rehearsal time after school and on weekends. So you can kind of equalize that out… You're talking [hours that are] minimally paid. And if we were in the private sector [laughs], I would not be going down… But then again I chose to be in public service. And public service doesn't pay." Ms. Gene's response to my question regarding adequacy of compensation brings to light multiple elements for analysis. First of all, she asserts her own career's validity and recognizes the efforts of other teachers by pointing out that the amount of energy and time invested outside of school is similarly monumental for teachers of all subjects. Further, her mention of the work *outside* of school time suggests issues of unpaid or underpaid labor. In the context of a discussion surrounding teacher burnout and turnover, unpaid labor and exertion of strenuous energy, along with emotional and affective labor's potentially infinite demand—as a result of the thought-time structure of educational careers

(Noonan, 2016)—become especially important factors to consider. Ms. Gene mentions that her unpaid labor outside of school time would be inconceivable in the private sector, but remembers that she *chose* public service, and thus chose a career that would not, she implies, necessarily compensate her fully for her labor.

Mr. Thomas gives the similarly blunt answer that he is not adequately compensated for his work as a science teacher. He says, with his characteristic frankness, "for the amount of education you have to have to be a teacher, we are one of the lowest paid professions." This is a common complaint among educators, and has served as a rallying cry for striking teachers across the country. Time Money quoted a union president who reflected similar sentiments to those of my interlocutors: "We get paid less for similar skills and take on more and more stress than most people who are working in America" (Mulhere, 2018). Studies have shown that, even when controlling for certain relevant factors, teachers still receive 18.7% less in compensation than comparable workers (Mulhere, 2018); when accounting for the non-wage benefits (such as insurance, retirement plans, etc.) teachers— including some of my interlocutors—tend to emphasize as making up for inadequate wages, the discrepancy is still 11.1% between teachers and comparable workers (Mulhere, 2018).

Coming from a family of low socioeconomic status and with job experience in multiple areas of the private sector before becoming a teacher, Mr. Cantona provides a particularly disparaging condemnation of teachers' financial compensation. He says,

Teachers aren't paid even close to enough, it's ridiculous, when you see like—I got paid more coaching relative to what I get paid now… But, yeah, teaching high school should be a six-figure job. Like it's just not even a question to me that it should be. I work 50-55 hours a week without fail, I have to force myself to take

Saturdays off… No question, like it's not even debatable, like the amount of work I put in, and the amount of work I used to put in and I saw other people put in for six figure jobs.

The question of hours spent working throughout the week connects directly to Ms. Gene's observations about teachers' energies spent outside of the classroom. The comment is relevant in this context in consideration of the pay that teachers make relative to private sector careers. Why are teachers not receiving commensurate financial compensation to similarly educated workers in the American economy?

Perhaps the answer lies in the negative messaging and complex perception of educators in mainstream cultures of the United States, as addressed in the background portion of the introductory chapter. One study found that our society's gendered pay gap persists, in part, because women tend to choose lower-paying professions that emphasize serving others or "giving back" (The State of the Gender Pay Gap, 2018). However, this knowledge begs the question: do we devalue the labor involved in service-oriented teaching, or do we devalue work, especially care work and affective labor, *because it has has historically been performed by women?* Luckwaldt (2018) posits that it is in fact a feedback loop; she writes, "high-value, low-paid professions like teaching are caught in a loop: women are taught to value giving back to the world, instead of to their own bottom line, and choose their career accordingly, which results in a female-dominated occupation that continues to pay relatively low wages" (Luckwaldt, 2018). Either way, the processes of feminization and professionalization in the teaching profession has probably contributed to this devaluation of teachers as measured by their wages.

This financial situation can be burdensome on many teachers. Mr. Cantona recognizes that while his salary and benefits are adequate for his family because his wife

is an administrator, thus demonstrating the superior pay of administrators, "a lot of teachers really, really struggle to make ends meet." An interesting element in consideration of teachers' financial benefits are the alternative ways of earning money as an educator—by seizing opportunities to coach a sport, facilitate a club, direct a school musical, and many others. Teachers earning additional pay above the teachers' salary is common in Tacoma Public Schools. In fact, according to *The News Tribune*, TRI (that additional time, responsibility, and incentive) constituted around 25.4% of the average teacher's salary in the district (Morton, 2017). In other words, around one-quarter of what teachers were receiving was earned through extra work outside of the primary roles and responsibilities outlined in their teaching contract. This implies that a significant source of income for the average teacher in the Tacoma School district is realized through the performance more labor than is initially expected of them. Mr. Bradford, the young and enthusiastic English teacher at Oak Ridge is involved in multiple endeavors at his school that secure this TRI pay. He laments, "it's depressing if you really think about it." While he concedes that there are many ways of earning extra money as a teacher "if you just look, and you ask," these outlets for pay within the school structure do not always yield the benefits that teachers may desire or expect. For example, Mr. Bradford had a colleague who coached a sport, thus earning extra money on top of his paycheck for classroom teaching. But when he looked more closely at the stipend, he realized that he received just $1.50 for his work as a coach. "And when they discovered that," Mr. Bradford relays, they said, "'this is depressing. I'm making a buck-fifty an hour doing what I do?'"

Mr. Davison's situation demonstrates the bind that many teachers are in, and the decision to take on multiple jobs to make ends meet: he works five jobs "to make it all happen." At Oak Ridge, he teaches full time in the classroom, teaches online classes,

coaches two sports, and writes for a local paper. Mr. Davison is a clear example of the ways in which teachers perform exorbitant amounts of labor to meet their financial needs. Even so, he says, "I'm not someone who complains about teacher salaries because I will trade my time for money any day. The fact that I get to spend time with my family and friends and kids is much more important to me than money." Here, Mr. Davison makes an explicit connection between the financial and non-financial rewards of his career as a teacher; in the next section, I will explore the significance of my interlocutors' expressed associations between the financial and non-financial compensation they receive for their labor.

Non-Financial Compensation

As implied by this last comment from Mr. Davison, the financial compensation is not the paramount issue to understanding teachers' conceptualizations of their careers and its rewards. In fact, teachers' discussions of their financial rewards are much more complex than unadulterated negativity: complaints about salary *did not* constitute the majority of our discussion about financial compensation. Some teachers are satisfied with their financial compensation. And while many teachers *do* discuss the negative or draining aspects of their job and the limited financial compensation they receive, nearly every teacher pivots the conversation from negative discussion of financial rewards to emphasizing how their financial compensation is *not* lacking, and directly connecting to their non-financial or "psychic" (Lortie, 1975) rewards.

This expressed connection between their financial and non-financial compensation elucidates a connection between the two abstract concepts in my interlocutors' minds. For example, after expressing that he is not adequately compensated for his work as a teacher, Mr. Thomas goes on to emphasize that "by no means are we [teachers] poor or suffering,"

and discusses the good life that he lives and the non-financial rewards he gets from teaching, such as time and meaningful relationships with students. In fact, several teachers reflect similar sentiments in their own evaluations of their compensation, saying that they are "not poor," and turn the conversation to what they *do* have or *can* do. This redirection of the focus of conversation from potentially negative aspects of their financial compensation to the things they can have and can do suggests a common and illuminating theme: teachers tend to address and refute negative cultural understandings of their career and its rewards by reminding the listener of the elements of their career that are of greater importance to them. The common messages about teachers rest upon the notion that teachers are underpaid, and conceive of them as occupying a low-status and prestige position and potentially deterring highly-qualified candidates from the profession. My interlocutors refute this message by turning and connecting to the comforts and benefits of their careers.

Teachers also make explicit connections between financial compensation and non-financial, psychic rewards. Some mention, for instance, that they would *rather* receive certain non-financial benefits than higher salaries, as we saw above in Mr. Davison's comments about his valuation of time over money, and in Ms. Alvarez's earlier comment about desiring more recognition rather than more money. Mr. Cameron similarly suggests that he "would much rather be compensated by smaller class sizes than by a larger wallet. Because I think that that's really the key to effective education." Here, Mr. Cameron's comment on his own compensation makes clear that he prioritizes positive educational outcomes *over* his own financial position. Call it selflessness, prioritization of others' needs, or something else, this demonstrates that Mr. Cameron's career motivations and values are student-centered, and do not simply reflect the objective of making money and

providing for his family. He wants change in the educational system that would benefit his students before his own monetary benefit. Thus, Mr. Cameron's conceptualization of his career and what he desires to derive from his work can be understood as implicitly connected to the aforementioned "service" aspect of teaching. Two other teachers make explicit connections between financial and non-financial rewards that reveal service-related labor ideologies. Mr. Cantona references the positive feelings he gets from teaching. He says a day in the classroom is just "a fun day. Like you get done, and it's, you're exhausted but it's a feeling of accomplishment that you just don't really get from like, 'oh, I hit my bonus this quarter.'" Again, Mr. Cantona incorporates his experience working in the private sector to draw the conclusion that financial success does not elicit the meaningful feelings of accomplishment he receives from his positive and impactful work as a teacher. Mr. Atom, the advanced science teacher at North Shore, similarly expresses the importance of a sense of fulfillment in his career over the compensatory financial elements: "It's a lot better to make less money and enjoy what you do, than make a lot of money and be miserable." These labor ideologies indirectly reject the implications of teachers' financial compensation as substandard, furthering instead notions of personal fulfillment and reward in their career. These and other non-financial benefits featured prominently in the majority of my interlocutors' interviews.

One of the major non-financial reward that many of my interlocutors emphasize is the time off teachers have outside of work, especially the break they get over the summer months. While one of the negatively expressed messages about teaching that some of my interlocutors cited and refuted is that teachers become teachers *because* of the summer breaks, the benefit of time is a crucial *element* of teachers' non-financial rewards (though generally not one of the motivating elements to become a teacher). When I ask Mrs.

McQueen, the sassy English teacher at Jameson, what she gets out of teaching beyond financial compensation, she immediately answers "summer." She then laughs, and asks, "do other people say that first? I don't know." Well, Ms. McQueen has no reason to be self-conscious of her jump to summer as a principal benefit of teaching: plenty of her colleagues feel the same. Summer is viewed as a major benefit of teaching that is not present in other careers. Mr. Atom quotes another teacher: "The thing he said, that I love, he says, 'I am rich, in time.'" This quote implicitly references the connection between financial and non-financial benefits, suggesting the potential inadequacy of financial compensation (by using the word, "rich"), but emphasizing that which teachers *do* have an abundance of: time. Within the benefit of work schedules and summer break is the ancillary reward of more time with one's family, and many of the teachers I interviewed appreciate this perceived relative abundance of time.[6] Mr. Franklin, the advanced math teacher at Oak Ridge, makes clear that "I'm a family person, so anything I say that is a benefit and makes you happy is usually going to relate back to family. So, being done with the job early enough I can go watch my kids play sports, or do things. Having time off that I can go do things with the family." This does not necessarily imply an emphasis upon student relationships and outcomes which I am attempting to draw out in this thesis. However, teachers' motivations are clearly multidimensional and complex, and many of my teachers are motivated by external impetuses, such as family, that move beyond the relational aspects of the career. Thus, it is important to remember that though the primary argument of this thesis is that teachers emphasize and prioritize affective labor and relationships with

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[6] Teachers do not necessarily have more time in terms of concrete minutes/hours than people in other professions. Their time off with holidays and summer break as allowed by the school system do allow for greater flexibility and perception of time. Noonan (2016) calls this unstructured format of educators' time "thought-time" and contrasts it to "money-time," or formats of time structured by productive capacities and objectives.

their students, their understandings of and motivations for labor in their career are complex and varied, and situated within their own background and cultural/community context.

Even so, the benefit of time off and time with family during the summer does not represent a solely self-focused benefit in the eyes of the teacher. Some teachers conceptualize this time off as an opportunity to recharge, a necessary element of their extreme exertion of energy and emotion for their students. Mr. Cameron calls teaching "a work hard, play hard profession," and saying, "between September and June, my life is teaching." Thus the balance in time between the summer and other months is heavily tilted toward heavy exertion in one's work during the school year. Ms. Alvarez, the Spanish teacher from North Shore, names summer first when asked about the non-financial rewards she receives: "My summers off are wonderful, I gotta say. A teacher needs their time off, because you give *so much* in the classroom, emotionally. Most of the time, I go home and I'm emotionally drained, I just want to sleep sometimes." Later in the interview, she revisits this idea in the context of financial compensation, saying, "I would not change my job for anything else that pays more. I would not. [I would] never be anything that pays tons of money and then I wouldn't have time for myself to enjoy my family… Even though a teaching job is so draining daily, I get my summers, which I can relax. So it's okay." Here, Ms. Alvarez makes two major connections: between financial and non-financial benefits, in addition to the connection between draining aspects of the career and the revitalization necessary during the summer. Especially in consideration of whether the structure of the school and the expectations placed on teachers' exertion of affective labor allow them to fulfill their expectations and goals for themselves, teachers' conceptualizations of their energy exertion and reward in time become exceedingly important. Here, these teachers recognize the summer as a crucial period for rest and recovery in consideration of the

substantial but apparently crucial amount of affective labor and care work they exert throughout the school year.

Teachers also thoroughly address the psychic benefits (as defined and elucidated by Lortie (1975)), what I sometimes playfully referred to in the interviews as "the touchy-feely stuff;" in other words, the way that teaching makes them feel. Some teachers receive a sense of self-esteem and self-satisfaction from teaching. Mr. Galt, the committed social studies teacher with a variety of expressed feelings of singularity, shares, "I take tremendous satisfaction in what I'm doing. Because I've done it—what's that song from Sinatra? I've done it *my way.*" Part of Mr. Galt's satisfaction comes from his feeling of hard work, unique to his own position as a socially-conservative, passionate, and unique teacher, as evinced by his feelings of singularity as addressed in the final section of Chapter 1. Mr. Cantona, in the context of his low-income students' financially-focused reactions to his career change from the private sector to teaching in a public school, says that he talks to his students about the importance of pursuing something that you feel passionate about: "what makes you happy is more important [than what only makes you money]; and doing things that matter, doing things that you're good at, is very important too." Here, Mr. Cantona justifies his career move to his students who, as he acknowledges, come from "poor" backgrounds, and thus have a fairly utilitarian perspective, wondering "how can this help me get a job? How can this help me make money?" Mr. Cantona tries to redirect their attention to something that he finds meaningful and rewarding in his career: the satisfaction of doing something that he cares about and makes him happy, rather than focusing on monetary compensation.

Many teachers also deeply connect to the service aspect of teaching which requires direct teacher-student contact and meaningful interaction. Thus, an emphasis upon the

psychic reward of serving students reinforces the notion that my interlocutors consider their relationships with students significant in their role and rewards as teachers. As Mr. Atom said in his discussion of teacher-student relationships, you "can't put a price on it," his comment indicates the non-financial nature of the benefits that teachers receive from their relationships with students. In subsequent sections, we will continue the discussion of teachers' relationships with students as part of the non-financial rewards they receive with students, while unpacking the directionality of these benefits, as well as the most emphasized elements of the relationships between student and teacher.

Multidirectional Benefits

As elucidated in the previous chapter, the non-financial or psychic benefits of interacting and building relationships with students are critical to teachers' conceptualizations of their connection to their career. A significant portion of these non-financial benefits are realized through their relationship to students; in this section, I will explore these particular benefits through analysis of comments teachers made in reference to their relationships with students.

For many teachers, some of the most cherished parts of teaching and greatest non-financial rewards are realized through their direct interaction and relationships with students. Mr. Bradford tells me that teaching "is really where [he feels] good—working with kids, being able to kind of have that rapport, have that relationship." Similarly, when asked what her favorite part of teaching is, Ms. Gene conveys the connection she makes with her students through her subject: "Well I'd say, this is equal, creating great music—or creating great musical experiences for kids, but also the conversation. And the humor. And they keep me young. I have more hip talk than anybody I know, of my age. [Me: so you would say the connections you make with students—] –Yeah good words. Connections

via music and via conversation." In these comments about the way in which her musical classroom cultivates these interactions, Ms. Gene evokes the idea that these are not simply relationships between an adult and a student; these are the particular relationships formed between student and teacher that outside of the institutional setting of the school (or that individual teacher's classroom) may not exist, or would function in notably different ways. One unique aspect of this relationship is the fact that it exists not as an end in itself, but as a means to the end of learning and positive experiences. The value she herself receives is not inherent in the relationship, but elucidated through her role in producing positive experiences for students. These exchanges between students and teachers that positively add to their professional experience are made possible through the relationship between teacher, student, and classroom.

Mr. Thomas expresses that relationships with students continue to sustain him in the profession. While he has previously considered leaving the career to seek something new, he returns to the "meaningful piece" of his career: "I have conversations with my students, and read the things they write, and all that and it becomes really hard to consider leaving. Because it comes back to that piece of what I'm doing *does* matter." This teacher finds value and meaning through his interactions with students and his perception of his effects on the students—so much so that his desires to switch professions are quelled by his student-teacher relationships. For Mr. Thomas, meaningful connections with students are enough to keep him in his role as teacher. Clearly, the aspect of a meaningful career (i.e. the service aspect), derived through relationship-building and the performance of affective labor, contributes to teachers' non-financial, psychic compensation, helping them feel fulfilled and satisfied in their career. This is significant in consideration of high teacher turnover rates (Strauss, 2017) and to understanding what draws people to and keeps them

in teaching positions—knowledge which can help align incentives to alleviate the issue of high rates of teacher turnover.

These benefits are not without their difficulties, however. Mr. Cantona highlights the positive feeling he experiences when he reaches a certain point in his relationships with students that requires struggle:

> Once the kids figure out that I'm for them, and when I tell them I love them I really mean it, that's not fluff from me, and that when they need help I will help them with anything and everything that I possibly can—within the law and within my means—I will do that. I think once they figure that out, it just turns into… it's still work, don't get me wrong. It's still work, it just turns into like, a fun day. Like you get done and you're exhausted but it's a feeling of accomplishment that you just don't really get from like—"oh I hit my bonus this quarter."

These comments embody a whole range of the important themes that my interlocutors expressed in relation to their struggles with and enjoyment of building relationships with students. First of all, Mr. Cantona states that the "fun" (reward) he receives when he reaches this breakthrough with the students does not negate the effort and struggle that is still required of forging and maintaining relationships with students while relaying academic content. Therefore, psychic rewards do not imply lack of work or difficulty, as reward and challenge are not mutually exclusive. Instead, the difficulties of teaching can subsequently elicit a range of psychic rewards as a *result* of their difficult nature. Mr. Cantona expressed to me that he often faces initial resistance from his students, that they are unsure of whether he is really "for" them, as a consequence of the differences between his and his students' backgrounds and identities. He credits this friction to what he describes as a sort of distance between he and his students. Mr. Cantona remembers that during his time as a student

teacher at a middle school with a primarily white and middle-class student body, he got along with students "very quickly because we were from the same place culturally. Our locations—physically, mentally, and culturally—were a lot closer…" At the high school in which he teaches now, however, the students are at a "physical, cultural place that is a lot farther from where I am at," thus making the development of a student-teacher relationship take longer. "It's just the friction of distance." But, as he says, when he finally bridges that distance, it proves to be a fulfilling and elating experience for Mr. Cantona.

So, how do teachers view the impact of their relationships on their students? Many insist that relationship-building has a significant impact upon, and creates positive outcomes for, the young adults in their classroom. For example, Ms. Gene emphasizes her role in providing positive experiences for her students, especially giving them positive memories through music and performance. Mr. Cantona strives to "give students as good or better an experience than [he] had" in high school, a clear demonstration of his performance of affective labor, intending to influence the *experience* of the student. in reaching goals they didn't think was possible.

Reciprocal Rewards between Student and Teacher

In some significant ways, the teachers are reciprocally benefitted by the teacher-student interactions that are intended to benefit students. For instance, aspects of service to students build the foundations for many of these teachers' psychic rewards. As we saw in Chapter 1, many educators are drawn to teaching for its elements of service. When asked about the psychic rewards he receives from teaching, Mr. Galt cites the feeling of contributing to society. Similarly, Ms. Alvarez says that she receives a big satisfaction from feeling like she is helping others, and Mr. Cantona tells me that "Being a part of something bigger than yourself is just so fulfilling for me." Thus, the contributions that teachers make

to others, in turn, benefit them. This can be seen as a reciprocal relationship of the benefits accrued by both student and teacher through their interactions in the classroom. Further, Mr. Bradford tells me that he visits his own former teachers because they had such an impact on him, and *he wants to reciprocate.* This is a clear and explicit demonstration of the potential and experienced multidirectional benefits within student-teacher relationships in public schools.

In these ways, the benefits teachers receive that are a) non-financial, and b) multidirectional. These rewards can also be conceptualized as complexly *reciprocal* gifts, as established by Mauss in his seminal work, *The Gift* (Mauss, 1925)[7]. Mauss' concept of gifts as reciprocal exchange provides a way of conceptualizing the relationships between student teacher, as it signifies the imbuement of social power and significance, as well as solidifies the moral bond and relationship within the "exchange" between the two parties. Further, in the educational context, there is a giving of the self and recognition of the other through the exchange (Berking, 1999 qtd. in Martínez-Alemán, 2007), as demonstrated by the performance of affective labor on the part of the teacher, paired with the recognition of the full personhood of the student, as discussed in Chapter 1. However, as evinced by the discussion in that chapter, the recognition is not necessarily reciprocal, in that the student is not expected to perform the same kinds of affective labor, nor is she expected to recognize the full personhood of the teacher. In effect, although it derives reciprocal benefits through the relationships built, the affective labor performed by the teacher is *not* reciprocated in the teacher-student relationship.

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[7] Though Mauss engages many anthropological concepts (the idea that certain groups of people are "primitive" or "backward"), that are outdated, problematic, and thus not to be incorporated into the theoretical drive of my research, the concept of the reciprocal gift works well in the context of this thesis; thus, I want to emphasize that I will engage certain aspects of his work without approving of his work as a whole.

Inheriting the Former Teacher's Role: Rewards that are not Reciprocal but Continual

Thus, not all exchanges between teacher and student are reciprocal, nor do all benefit both parties directly involved in the exchange. Henry Adams, an American historian who lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, once said that "A teacher affects eternity. He can never tell where his influence stops" (Gregladen, 2009). Relations across generations of teachers (i.e. the teacher affects the student, the student becomes a teacher, and that teacher subsequently affects more students) are what I call *continual*, rather than reciprocal. As in the reciprocal relationship, the giving this continual relationship is not "used up" and does not have use-value, but continues in circulation beyond the initial exchange (Martínez-Alemán, 2007). Lortie briefly touches upon this type of continual exchange when he wrote, "Teachers have been shaped in turn by their own teachers and by their personal responses to those teachers—such influences stretch over many years. The result is an accretion of views, sentiments, and implicit actions that may only be partially perceived by the beginning teacher" (Lortie, 1975, xi). Many of my interlocutors cited the significance of their former teachers' actions and impact (whether positive or negative) on their path to becoming a teacher, as well as their work as an educator.

Nine of my thirteen interviewees mentioned their former teachers in some capacity. Most, but not all, of these recollections were positive. Mr. Hundley, the social studies teacher at Oak Ridge who expressed interest in who his students become as people, conjectures that part of what attracts many people to the profession are reasons similar to his own; he says, "many people have an experience like [he does], where you had maybe one, maybe a bunch of teachers that sort of impacted you to the point where you want to do that to other people, you want to have that same impact or rapport." Indeed, many of

these interlocutors say that their former teachers influenced their path to joining the profession. Ms. Gene, Mr. Atom, Mr. Cameron, and Mr. Hundley all responded that their former K-12 teachers positively influenced their decisions to become a teacher, while Mr. Thomas recalled that a negative experience with a high school chemistry teacher motivated him to become a teacher and prevent other people from having the negative experience that he did. Mr. Bradford had an interesting response regarding the same question of influence, laughing that a fictional teacher from a show he watched in his youth was a major inspiration in his desire to be a teacher. All of these examples illustrate the power and influence that a teacher's work—whether positive or negative, real or fictional—can yield over their students, even inspiring their own participation in the profession of teaching.

Former teachers also influence many of my interlocutor's praxes as teachers. Some teachers' pedagogic style and methodology were influenced or inspired by that of their former teachers. This form of inspiration and subsequent modelling can be divided into two broad categories of influence on the academic or instructional form of one's teaching, and influence on the relational form of one's teaching. Mr. Franklin and Mr. Atom both experienced educators in college whose style, the way that they taught and ran their classes, inspired their own practice and ways of teaching students. Mr. Franklin's master teacher in his student teaching placement was "just one of those guys who was always prepared, explained things in detail. I just, there was something about the way he ran his class that influenced me, made me want to be like him, I guess." Mr. Atom's professors were "cool about things," providing a classroom in which learning could be enjoyable, and he strives to bring this to his own classroom through his attitude and lesson activities.

For others, the interaction with their former teachers shaped the relational form and style of their teaching, the way they relate to and make themselves available to students.

For instance, Mr. Bradford and Mr. Cameron were both touched by teachers who built relationships with their students. Mr. Bradford recalled that the aforementioned fictional teacher who so influenced him was "a really cool balance of the hard-nosed, intelligent teacher but he really did care about his students." Mr. Cameron's beloved high school English teacher both got to know him "as a kid" while teaching him "as a student," thus highlighting the importance of recognizing students' lives outside of school, as elucidated in Chapter 1. The fact that these two teachers, Mr. Bradford and Mr. Cameron, clearly emphasize relationships as part of their practice today, demonstrates the powerful influence of their relationships with former teachers on their own ways of thinking about and practicing education. Ms. Gene's former teachers influenced her on both fronts; she tries to emulate elements of both the way she ran her class, as well as how she related to students. Ms. Gene "tried to remember the things that [her fond junior high choir teacher] was really spot on with, and the relationship that she built with her students…" She also thinks that she "learned structure and passion from her."

Mr. Thomas and Mr. Cantona both express that they were influenced by experiences with particular former teachers, and hope to provide experiences for their own students based on these experiences; their feelings about these teachers differed. Mr. Thomas felt strongly about, even "hated" his high school chemistry teacher, and thus wants to prevent other students from having similarly negative experiences. Mr. Cantona, on the other hand, had such a positive, "awesome" time in high school that he wants "to give students as good or better an experience" as he had. Labor focused on influencing the experience of the subject of their work (their students) clearly demonstrates the definition of affective labor. Thus, their impetus for performing the affective labor of altering a student's experience to provide positive educational experiences for their students were

based explicitly upon the teacher's own experience in school. This demonstrates the significant impact of a teacher's personal experience with former teachers on their drive to teach their own students, and to perform affective labor for their students.

Clearly, teachers can have a significant effect on their students. Many of these teachers indicated that their former educators influenced them to become teachers and some of my informants' former students are now teachers. My analysis of this phenomenon evokes a relationship of continuity (in contrast to a commodity-exchange relationship or reciprocal exchange relationship) between "generations" of teachers, built upon teacher-student relationships in the classroom. This effect of the teacher upon the student/future-teacher is distinct from other forms of training or professional relationship in that the primary subjects of the teacher's focus are the students themselves. In training relationships in other professions, this is not necessarily the case, as a supervisor/superior would prepare trainees for a job or task. Public school educators teach and focus on the student as a person, not in preparing them for a particular job; the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975, p. 61) is an auxiliary effect of the student's thousands of hours of observation of their teachers' work, with a focus upon experiential learning and relationships.

As we have seen, the way that teachers conceptualize the rewards of their labor continue the theme of student-centeredness and an emphasis upon affective labor, in that teachers consistently turn the conversation of their compensation to non-financial, student-focused elements of their rewards. In Chapter 3, we will see how teachers' grievances about their career and the structure of educational institutions reveal the ways in which teachers feel their ability to perform affective labor (and thus their ability to enjoy many of the non-financial rewards discussed in this chapter) is inhibited by the constraints placed upon them by the educational structure at large.

Chapter 3: Teachers' Grievances Highlight Structural Constraints on their Labor

Thus far, I have addressed the ways in which teachers conceptualize their labor, the rewards they receive for that labor, and how my interlocutors' discussions of their labor are focused on affective labor and teacher-student relationships. As we turn to my interlocutors' frustrations with their career, we see that these teachers expressed various grievances and criticisms related to the structure of the school system and their place within that structure. Ultimately, it seems that many of their complaints demonstrate obstacles or hindrances that stand between these teachers and their true goals of performing affective labor and building relationships, and especially of reaching satisfaction by helping students. In this chapter, I will explore how teachers see their place within the institution of the school and district, and how their labor (which is varied in nature, but with a continued emphasis upon emotional labor) is extensive. By looking at teachers' grievances about their job, especially their frustrations with the leadership at the school and district levels and the educational system as a whole, we see the effects of the expectations placed on teachers and their labor, and the way that elements of the school system place constraints on their ability to perform their work in the way that they want to. Ultimately, I conclude that my interlocutors perform labor for which their compensation is not adequately met with returns of power or influence, due to the fact that structure of the school system does not facilitate or offer support for teacher prioritization of their affective labor and relationships with students.

(Un)Sustainability of the Exertion of Teachers' Labor

To begin with, we will look at teachers' conceptualizations of the energies and time associated with teachers' labor. As a choir teacher, Ms. Gene does not like to talk about teaching outside of work; she says, "I don't think I like to talk about it because it's… the

job is draining. And I love it, and I have a passion for it, it's still [indecipherable] after thirty years. I don't want to talk about it after hours." Despite this passion she continues to feel for her career even as she nears retirement, Ms. Gene expresses that the "draining" elements of the job lead her to not wish to discuss her career outside of the work day. While some other teachers differ in that they do talk about teaching outside of school, Ms. Gene's comment is especially of note, because of the contrast she makes between her passion and the drain she feels.

Beyond the exertion of time and energy that can drain teachers, my interlocutors also note the *emotionally* draining aspects of their career. Mrs. McQueen, the kind English teacher at Jameson, articulates that "it can be heartbreaking, you know, when you see kids suffer or something." She goes on to say that she embraces that aspect of the career, saying, "maybe I'm there to make a difference." This is a clear reference back to the service-related aspects emphasized by many teachers in Chapter 1, and appears to be this teacher's way of conceptualizing the effects and significance of her labor. Still, Ms. Alvarez and Mr. Bradford both express comments about the exhaustion they bring home after a day at the school. Ms. Alvarez, the Spanish teacher at North Shore, describes the necessity of summer and other breaks as a psychic reward for teachers: "My summers off are wonderful, I gotta say. A teacher needs their time off, because you give *so* much in the classroom emotionally. I, most of the time, I go home and I'm drained, emotionally drained. I just want to sleep sometimes, I'm so so tired." Mr. Bradford, the young English teacher at Oak Ridge reflects similar sentiments, and expresses the detrimental effects on his family, saying, "I'll put so much emotion into my students, that at the end of the day, like I don't even want to think… And I know that's like unfair to my family." Clearly, the amount of energy, and especially emotions that teachers put into their work can cause exhaustion, demonstrating the

potentially negative effects of affective labor. Again, this is demonstrating the significance of affective labor in teachers' work with students, and while these teachers consider it exhausting, draining or affecting on their personal life, they consider it crucial to the work they do in the classroom.

Mr. Bradford, expresses that despite the exhaustion that results from this exertion, the affective labor he performs is something that he feels is important in his career. He tells me, "But for me there's no other way I feel like I can be. Like I just, I genuinely love my students… But it is very emotionally draining, I find myself very mentally exhausted. at the end of some days." Mr. Cantona, the social studies teacher at Jameson with experience in the private sector, similarly states that good teaching requires a level of commitment and energy that is not required of other, private sector careers: "if you want to be great, you have to give your life for it." His remark dovetails with his comments mentioned in a Chapter 2 ("Teachers aren't paid even close to enough, it's ridiculous, when you see like… the amount of work I put in, and the amount of work I used to put in and I saw other people put in for six figure jobs") in pointing out the discrepancies between teaching and private sector careers. Mr. Cantona's employment experience in both the private sector and in public education has developed his understanding of the efforts and energies exerted in teaching, along with the rewards received for that effort. Clearly, he believes that the energy he invests in teaching is greater than that in his marketing career—because, as revealed by his comments in Chapter 1, he cares more about teaching and feels he is making a contribution—while the financial compensation does not reflect this greater effort in the classroom versus the office. Perhaps there is a disconnect here: some irreconcilable element between emotional exertion or the draining aspects of the career and the rewards they receive. Affective labor, as we know, has the potential for unlimited demand through the thought-time structure of teachers work,

and while these teachers feel their performance of this kind of labor is crucial to the work they do as a teacher, it seems they are not necessarily fully recognized for it.

According to some of my interlocutors, the exertion of the amount of energy necessary for teaching is ultimately unsustainable. Ms. Frizzle, a passionate scientist in her twenty-second year of teaching, acknowledges,

> So, I love teaching. I think it takes an immense amount of energy, the kind of energy that I can't sustain forever... So I don't think that's something that you can do forever, and do it well. And I don't want to do it once I stop doing it well. Like if I can't be good at my job, I can't relate to kids, if I can't hold them accountable, and have them learning from me, I definitely don't want to keep doing this.

Here, Ms. Frizzle emphasizes the aforementioned necessity of high degree of energy and emphasizes that while she is currently able to maintain that degree, she knows she will not be able to forever. This is concerning given our established understanding of the detrimental effects that teacher burnout and teacher turnover rates can have on the school system and on the students themselves, as discussed in previous chapters. Should not a career support its occupants in sustaining themselves until retirement? Especially given level of education required and student loans resulting from this education and time required before retirement, one can understand teacher's concerns about financial issues in the context of the unsustainable energy required for teaching. This unsustainability is augmented by teachers' frustrations about certain tasks they do not consider essential to their student-centered focus.

Demand and Distraction of Administrative Tasks

Some of my interlocutors' grievances criticize those tasks and roles that teachers are expected to perform that they consider irrelevant to the most important elements of

their work. Ms. Frizzle describes the frivolous routine of administrative or so-called "house-keeping" tasks that teachers are expected to complete every day:

> And then the ton of stuff like … return a parent phone call within twenty-four hours. A lot of administrative features, functions with like paperwork that I find really difficult and annoying to keep up on because they're not my priority. They're important to other people. But I don't see them having any direct reference to my job. And then there's grading … and trying to be timely about that. Both ethically and responsibly, and I'm bad at both. [Laughs] Truly… I want you to have feedback, but I want to give you feedback so that is gonna take a really long time for me to get them back to you.'

The way Ms. Frizzle describes these responsibilities clearly demonstrates her frustrations with their prominence in the expectations of her daily routine. Her frustration does not necessarily stem from the monotony or tedium often associated with these tasks, but instead articulates a hierarchy of her own priorities in which these tasks rank below other tasks that are more student- or learning-oriented. One of the most well-known responsibilities of a teacher's career, grading, represents a different sort of internal conflict for Ms. Frizzle. She recognizes the importance of her completion of this task to student growth, but also identifies the constraints on her capacity to convey this feedback in a timely manner. This conflict represents tension between Ms. Frizzle's main priority—students and their learning—and her distaste for some of the tasks she is expected to complete on a daily basis. In this case, the responsibility also contributes to student learning, but still falls into the category of frustrating tasks in her day. Thus, Ms. Frizzle's tension illuminates the ways in which teachers' energies are demanded in a variety of manners, and that the conflict

stems from her desire to focus on her students and their learning, but is held back by the time required of other, seemingly frivolous tasks.

Lack of Resources

Ms. Frizzle insists that there must be some solution to providing teachers with a degree of satisfaction in their challenging career: "your job is never going to be easy. So if you can't fix that, what can you fix? How can you keep them supported?" The places that Ms. Frizzle does find satisfaction—in her interactions and relationships with students, as well as in her downtime—are at personal and interpersonal levels, meaning that she finds her primary satisfaction outside of the structure of the school system. Until schools and districts find structural ways of providing support and avenues for satisfaction for teachers, she suggests that structural issues of education and the career of teaching will persist. This may be related to her and other's conceptualization of limited resource available to teachers.

Mr. Cantona laments the limited resources at Jameson, and the unfair system of resource distribution in public schools. He argues, "Tying our resources to property, to property value, is so inequitable. And it just doesn't allow us to give students resources that need it the most… the creative backflips you gotta do some days with the lack of resources is ridiculous." He compares the resources at Jameson to those of a local private school—where every student has a personal iPad—to his school where a broken printer can jeopardize his lessons, and thus his students' learning, necessitating the need for an increase in his labor and innovation to adequately serve his students. Further, he expresses distaste for the lack of nutritional food served to students at school, citing research that demonstrates that students can "make much more gains on grades and test scores, if you just fed kids better food." Interestingly, he goes on to say, "we're shortchanging kids so

badly. So badly. By not giving them good, free food." In this quote, Mr. Cantona makes the interesting rhetorical choice to include himself in the groups shortchanging the students: while he is not in a position to determine resources for students, nor to decide whether or not to provide plentiful, free, nutritious food to his students, Mr. Cantona still uses "we're" instead of a distanced, third person pronoun. Though it does not seem that he considers himself part of the problem of resource allocation, he views his place in the institution of the school as part of a larger system of inequity and failure in education. Most importantly, Mr. Cantona recognizes the direct effect of the policy and resource allocation upon the student, and he understands that the affective labor he performs and the "backflips" he does to teach his students *despite* the inequitable structural constraints of the educational system, he cannot change the system of resource allocation to better serve his students. He reflects on the primary items he would like to change about the school system (more sleep, more reasonable time to prepare for high-stakes tests, better food, and a more equitable system for resource allocation) and frames them in terms of the benefits for kids, that they would "help out the kids so much." Ultimately, he "would love it if the kids had a better experience." In fact, this gets back to Mr. Cantona's primary motivations for becoming a teacher: he recognized that he had an exceptionally good experience in school, and wanted to provide positive experiences for his own students. The deficiencies he sees in the system can be understood as standing in the way of his achieving those goals, and his desire to change them represents an interest in eliminating his students' barriers to achieving a positive educational experience. It may also be of note that Mr. Cantona has ambitions to someday advance to a position in administration, meaning that in the future, he may occupy a position with greater power in decisions about resources at the school or district level. However, in his position as a teacher, Mr. Cantona does not yield the

decision-making power to affect the resource allocation at the school and district level; thus, resource allocation can be seen as a structural barrier that hinders Mr. Cantona's work and his students' success.

Overwork and Constraints on the Replenishment of Teachers' Labor

Time is another limited resource lamented by teachers. While teachers clearly value their time off, especially their summers, my interlocutors tend to view the resource of time as very limited in their profession. One teacher's situation especially illustrates the sorts of expectations and constraints that teachers face inside and outside of the classroom. Ms. Frizzle expends an enormous amount of time, both in the classroom and outside of the classroom, to her work as a teacher. In our interview, she mentioned the negative images some people receive about teaching, and we discussed the fact that I got some negative messages about becoming a teacher, even from my own teachers. Ms. Frizzle attributes this to a function of time and rewards: "I think the reality is that as a teacher, you put in a lot more hours than you're ever going to be acknowledged for. You're never going to be paid for them." This again evokes the discussion of amount of labor performed and the rewards received for that labor, as discussed throughout this thesis, but becomes especially important to understand the conceptualization of time as limited. Further, she describes her life and career before and after having a child: "I used to just, I used to stay in school until seven or eight o'clock at night, which you can't do when you have a kid. So instead, I just stay up 'til two or three o'clock in the morning doing those things so that I still devote the time she needs, but I get the things done I need; which is not good for you." Ms. Frizzle returns to the concept of the unsustainability energy in teaching, and in this case, time that she exerts for her career. As a future teacher, hearing about her intense schedule worries me; as an anthropologist, I wonder what concepts of time and labor play into this dynamic.

It is possible that the potentially infinite demand for teachers' affective labor in the profession of teaching contributes to the high rates of exhaustion, then subsequent burnout and turnover among teachers. Additionally, what is the significance of this, given Mr. Cantona's earlier comments about the high demand of time and energy relative to other, higher paying careers? Teachers clearly exert an enormous amount of time and labor to their career—time and labor for which, according to Ms. Frizzle, they are not consistently recognized or compensated.

Both Ms. Frizzle and Mr. Cantona decry the limited time for teacher-teacher collaboration. Ms. Frizzle says, "I don't think we do enough work at making coworkers supporters. We don't do team-building exercises. We don't give teachers time to collaborate. We don't make connections between them. And you *need* that, because this job is *hard*." While collaboration is a skill and activity that is valorized in many workplaces—and one I remember was emphasized in group projects in the classrooms of some of these teachers—these interlocutors feel they are not necessarily given adequate time and space for collaboration and support among teachers. Thus, these teachers view time (along with energy) as a limited resource of which they expend a great amount, yet they still do not have enough time to accomplish some of things they consider important to the school day. This may seem like a cliché lament of, "there aren't enough hours in the day to do what you want to do," but the significance of teachers' understanding of the time in their career is more critical than meets the eye. Ms. Frizzle and Mr. Cantona make clear that they expend a lot of time and energy in their career and still do not have the time to do something that they feel is very valuable to their practice: collaboration with other teachers. If this is considered valuable to these teachers, why is this not built into the structure of the school day or week? Why is the institution of the school built to be isolating? We have

discussed the ways in which teachers' focus and energies are mostly invested into affective labor, and the professed lack of time to collaborate demonstrates a desire on the part of these teachers to invest time and academic energy in teacher-teacher interactions to further the work they do in the classroom, but feel they do not have time.

Standardized Testing and the School as a Neoliberal Institution

A non-trivial portion of teachers' time and energy in the classroom is devoted to standardized testing. Au (2016) decries standardized testing in schools as a "broad project of reshaping public education along the lines of free-market capitalism" (Au, 2016, p. 39). He argues that "high-stakes, standardized tests have emerged as perhaps the most crucial piece underlying [neoliberal] reform efforts" (Au, 2016, p. 40), thus institutionalizing neoliberalism in the roles and expectations of teachers. This reimagined focus on neoliberal values within the public school classroom does not necessarily align with my interlocutors' goals and primary motives and expectations of their own labor. In fact, standardized testing stands as one of the most common grievances among my interlocutors. Mr. Bradford summarizes many of the complaints, saying,

> I wish we would get away from the bombardment of like the standardized test. Because that's what everything's geared towards now… And I feel like it's taking away from the *kid*. Like it's not as much about understanding the kid, understanding how to teach them. It's, "we got a deadline because this test is coming up in this month, and we gotta get, get, get x, y, and z done."

Here, Mr. Bradford summarizes the school's prioritization of standardized testing as drawing the focus of the classroom toward forthcoming exams and away from what he considers more vital in the school: the students themselves. Mr. Bradford emphasizes the preparatory element of high-stakes testing, not in terms of the *time* it takes away from other

tasks, as may have been inferred from previous sections of this chapter; instead, it is the *"focus"* upon standardized tests, to the exclusion or detriment of a focus on students, that frustrates him. This analysis reveals what Mr. Bradford most highly values in education; that is, a student-centered academic focus, in addition to emotional focus, as we found in his comments in Chapters 1 and 2. He relates the affective labor invested in the student ("understanding the kid…") to the academic functions of the classroom ("…and how to teach them"). Thus, he combines his conceptualization of his student-centered affective labor and his commitments to his students' academic education with the individualization of teaching and learning, simultaneously refuting the excessive emphasis upon standardized tests.

Mr. Bradford also underscores that teachers are often blamed for student performance on these standardized tests. He tells me, "And there is a lot of demand on teachers. We are the scapegoats when a lot of things go wrong. A kid gets a bad grade, it's our fault… Graduation rates, passing rates, test scores—like there's so much pressure." The focus on "when… things go wrong," implies that there is an attribution of *failure* to teachers, but there is not necessarily the same attribution to teachers in the case of success. Mr. Bradford refutes this "scapegoating" as attributing shortcomings to teachers in cases where it may not in fact be the fault of the teacher. It is possible this negative focus on the teacher in the case of perceived shortcomings stems from the teacher's expressed focus upon affective labor and the subject of that labor, the student, while the school and school district, according to many of my interlocutors, has a skewed focus upon appearances. In that case, the misalignment of the teacher's versus the school's foci could prompt those in positions of power to point to teachers' prioritization of affective labor and student-

centeredness as the issue, leading to the further disadvantaging of teachers' student-centered goals and placing structural constraints on those priorities.

While my research has shown that the focus of many of these teachers is frequently upon the student and the affective labor the teacher performs for that student, Mr. Bradford sees the emphasis of the school and district as lying elsewhere: "I feel like our district is very, um, big on appearances. And it's not as big on the kid. You know, it's about statistics, it's about trying to look as good as possible in the public eye, and not really focused on the kid." Mr. Hundley, the experienced social studies teacher at Oak Ridge, insists that

> we need to stop looking at percentages, and [start] looking at names, and looking at kids. And not saying, well 86% graduation rate—well, okay. So who are the 14%? What happened to them? And because they didn't graduate does that mean they're failures? Because they didn't graduate, is that our fault?... What are the factors? Not collectively, but individually. Until we start addressing that I don't think we can solve any problem.

This quote and the questions within it connect to Mr. Bradford's comment about blame—are teachers or the school to blame for the purported "failure" of these students? While Mr. Hundley's question is rhetorical, his focus lands on the individual *student* to look at the larger structural issues he sees in the school. Perhaps the attention to the overall appearances and numbers is not serving the students in the ways they purport to help them. For example, the advanced science teachers at Jameson and North Shore, Ms. Frizzle and Mr. Atom believe that their high school(s) are not adequately preparing students for college. Instead, Mr. Atom says, "I still kind of contend that in high school, all we really do is get kids… able to get into college. We don't really get them ready to be successful in college, you know." Mr. Atom and Ms. Frizzle believe that this is not enough, and in their

classes, they both strive to further prepare their students for the challenges of college. According to these teachers, the school and district's focus is not upon students' future success, but instead on the values that seem appealing from the outside, and on how external forces subsequently view the institution. Mr. Franklin, the advanced math teacher at Oak Ridge who boasts high standards for his students, similarly laments that his high school's policies on "late work" demonstrate a failure to prepare students for what they will experience after high school:

> there's a lot of things that we do that don't really mesh with the real world. And I know why we're doing it. It's because the school district is applying this pressure to reach a certain graduation rate, reach a certain achievement on test scores, reach, you know, a certain attendance rate, or whatever. I just think, we're not teaching them to be responsible.

While this quote is essentially about the academic aspects of teaching and learning (classroom policies related to content and production of student work), Mr. Franklin's comment suggests that his concern lies with preparing the student for the real world, thus developing that student as an individual. As opposed to simply passing them along in order to retain positive statistical measures for the school and district. Thus, Mr. Franklin seeks to consider the student as an individual person, deserving of the teacher's focus in preparation for life beyond the walls of the classroom, rather than viewing the student as a single part of the larger system.

All of these teacher concerns about the school and district prioritization of "appearance" and numbers over the student as an individual demonstrates another key issue in the misalignment of teacher versus administrative objectives. According to Mr. Bradford and Mr. Hundley, this is largely due to a lapse in communication between various parties

within the structure of the educational system. By nature, education has many players and stakeholders: teachers, students, parents, administrators, counsellors and the more liminal actors of the public and its taxpayers. Mr. Bradford commends the uniqueness of a system in which such a large number of parties work together, but wishes that there "were a way that every party could understand the other parties better… But there's rarely enough time for us as a group to really figure out how we can all work best together." Again, we see the issue of time as a perceived barrier standing between teachers and endeavors that they feel will lead to more successful educational outcomes and experiences for their students. But differences in motivation, such as a focus on students versus neoliberal values, leads to inefficiency, and even conflict and or failure. The root of the problem may lie in the actual staffing structure of the school, as many teachers criticize the system of the career ladder of teaching, as well as the devaluation of teacher input in decision-making.

The Hierarchical School Structure and Devaluation of Teacher Input

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the professionalization of the teacher and educational administration resulted in a structure in which garnering more influence in the school system requires the teacher to leave the classroom. Mr. Bradford used to have ambitions to move up into administration, but no longer wants to because of political and financial aspects. He explains this dilemma that many teachers face, saying, "you just have some good teachers that just want to teach... Sadly, sometimes the best teachers just want to teach." Thus, if teachers want to continue teaching in the classroom, there is not much room for upward mobility and gaining power in the system. This does not allow my interlocutors to garner much influence in their careers, and they express feelings of frustration with the devaluation of their opinions and insights in this chain of command.

Mr. Cameron describes this phenomenon as a result of the structure of education and the political workings of its' bureaucracy. He says, "teachers, they do have a say. But they have a say, minimally, as to how things are run. And, you know, I think that that's the nature—I don't think that's ever going to change." What is striking in this comment is Mr. Cameron's attribution of this minimal influence to the nature of teaching and education, describing it as a fixed aspect of the system, unlikely to change. Perhaps this is a result of the aforementioned hierarchical structure of the career ladder, up which Mr. Cameron professes he does not want to move, as he does not desire to pursue a position in administration. Mrs. McQueen, in her account of the things she wishes she could change about teaching, cites not the administration of a specific school, but district- and government-level policies. She wishes she could change "the expectations that come from above. So it's not the administrators, it's the district, or the nation. Like common core, say… giving it a specific language… And I think you need to trust your teachers to do that… If I could change teaching, I would take that away, and just say, 'I'm gonna trust that you know what you're doing and teach.'" The *trust* in teachers is a key element of this comment, and I wondered why there is this persistent devaluation of teacher voices and expertise in crucial decision-making.

Mr. Bradford experienced a harsh example of just how little say teachers truly have in school and district decision-making:

I was involved in an experience where we got to get sales pitches, essentially, from two different forms of curriculum for English Language Arts. And it was a room of about fifteen of us… And we said this thing, you know, option A, is better than option B, right… We're gonna make sure we all score this higher, to show the district this is what we want. And we all did it. And we even secretly did some

emails, and we all were like, 'okay, there's about ten or twelve of us that said this is really better.' A month later, they picked the other option. And it was kind of like… "this is like watching professional wrestling. The outcome was already determined. You just made us go through the match. You made it seem like we had a choice in who wins, but you already picked who won before this happened.' And that's how I've felt it's always been. They try to feign the idea that we have influence, but in reality, we don't. And it's really hard because, you know, we're on the front lines, and they don't really seem to value that expertise…. And it's kind of disheartening to see that play out time and time again. And you always have this idea of, maybe this time we have some influence. And then you come to find out, no, we—we don't.

This experience is a plain demonstration of the devaluation of teacher input. This disregard for teachers' opinions may, according to Mr. Bradford's comments, affect their self-perception of the profession, and could also contribute to negative external perceptions of the esteem of the profession. Overall, the structural devaluation of teaching may detract from efficient communication and limit student outcomes, as neoliberal values become more important than teacher understanding of, and catering to student. There is the "feigned" notion of incorporation of the expertise and opinions of the teachers in determining curriculum, followed by a supposed ignorance to this input. Mr. Bradford was reprimanded for expressing his frustration with the situation to his superiors, further demonstrating the hierarchical nature of input and lack of respect for teachers' experience in the school system. Mr. Bradford's emotion was evident in his account of this experience, and it was clear that this experience has continued to shape his understanding of his place

in the school system, as someone with expertise and experience in the classroom, but without a large degree of influence in the decision-making for the classroom.

When Mr. Bradford expressed this frustration with the devaluation of teachers' input, I had a hard time formulating my next question in a level-headed, scholarly manner. Eventually, I composed myself and asked Mr. Bradford why the district does not take into account the opinions of those in the classroom as readily as those of other actors in the system. He attributes it to a "classic totem pole[8] mentality," that people in administrative positions think, "because of the positions they're in, that they, quote-unquote, 'know more'… that whoever is at the top of the totem pole has to know more and be better than those below them." Again, the place of the teacher in the structure of the school system (in Mr. Bradford's words, the totem pole), plays a role in the way teachers understand the valuation of their input and expertise. The teacher, who is said to be lower on the totem pole, does not have the power that others who are higher in the totem pole, do despite the level of education they receive, the incredible expenditure of their energies and multiple forms of labor, and their daily interactions with students, who constitute the ultimate subject of the educational system.

We have seen how teachers view their place in the structure of the and district, and their criticisms and concerns about this system and their role within it. We further learned that these teachers feel that their expertise and input is not valued by people in various superior positions of the school structure. In this way, the transaction of labor and rewards can be seen as having one more component: the return of "input" or decision-making power. Structural issues prevent them from exerting the full force of their judgment and

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[8] A totem pole is a form of Northwest Coast Native American carvings in the structure of a pole; the term 'totem pole' is often used to indicate a hierarchical system/structure, as the figures (usually animals) portrayed in a totem pole are stacked on top of each other.

views that are driven by student-centered values; meanwhile, the schools' incentives and foci (image/appearances, standardized testing) contribute to the institutionalization of neoliberal structure and values in the school. It seems, from my interlocutor's comments in this previous section, that they feel they do not receive commensurable returns of power for the labor and expertise they bring to their career. Thus my ethnographic research yields the concept of an incommensurability of the labor and reward "transactions" that take place in the institution of the school: teachers conceptualize the labor they perform as important and immense, but feel that they are not rewarded with the sort of decision-making power and respect that should be yielded by nature of their expertise and effort. Teachers express the desire to continue their work in the educational system beyond these constraints and limitations placed upon them by the educational system, as evinced by their expressed plans for the future.

Plans for the Future as a Way of Transcending Structural Constraints

When I asked my interlocutors where they saw themselves in the near or distant future, many teachers address what they want to do in those coming years, whether through a career change or after retirement. Retirement featured prominently in about half of the teachers' answers; even teachers not very close to retirement age emphasized a potentially forthcoming exit from the profession.

For some, their idea of their future work lies within the field of education, but in a different context. Mr. Galt, the advanced history and social studies teacher at Jameson emphasizes, "Even now, as I near retirement, I don't see it as, 'I'm just going to stop and do nothing.' I'm looking for, you know, other ways to continue, in the teaching capacity, perhaps. Or, you know, other related kinds of endeavors." This is evidence of Mr. Galt's strong and continual commitment to teaching, which is one of the aspects he enjoys most

about the career. His comments also reflect the common theme of a desire to continue work in the educational system, but in a different context. Ms. Alvarez says, for example, that teaching "can be so stressful sometimes, that I dream that I could keep teaching. But I go to like, little house on the prairie, a little tiny town where there's only like five students in one room, more like a tutoring thing." She imagines that this context would relieve some of the stress she experiences currently in her larger public school classroom. These teachers' desire to teach in other contexts reflects an element of Hansen's (1995) concept of vocation in his suggestion that teachers may benefit from grounding "their identity not solely in their particular institution but rather in a larger vision of teaching… After all, most persons who aspire to teach do not have in mind working in a *particular* school. Rather they want to teach and to have a beneficial impact on the young" (Hansen, 1995, p. 126).

It seems that my interlocutors see teaching positions in other educational contexts as having less constraints of the sort that have been addressed in this chapter. As a result, these teachers idealize the pursuit of a continued career in education as a way of continuing to pursue the aspects of the career that they find most meaningful—i.e. building relationships, student-centered affective labor—while transcending the limits currently placed on their affective labor by the public education system in which they work. Whether an altered context for teaching would actually yield a less stressful work environment for teachers is not for me to discover or argue here; however, engaging in similar research to this thesis among teachers of other contexts may yield interesting insights to the stresses and labor expected of teachers across various contexts; the appendix to this thesis provides suggestions for future research based on the questions raised but not answered by this thesis.

This chapter has raised significant questions about teachers' frustrations, and impediments to teacher satisfaction. Ms. Frizzle underlines the potential consequences of the insufficiency of satisfaction for teachers. In the closing comments of her interview, Ms. Frizzle wanted me to know that

> There's this whole idea of burnout, and why teachers burnout… And I think there's an issue of job satisfaction here. So this has been my most difficult year of teaching, my most dissatisfied year of teaching. And that's a big deal, because this is the year where I felt like "Ugh if it was gonna be like this next year like maybe I would take a different job. Maybe I would stop working in the classroom."

This comment reflects the sentiments of teachers who desire to leave the classroom, while recognizing the exact causes and symptoms of the frustration. Ms. Frizzle asserts that the lack of satisfaction that she and some other teachers feel are enough to contribute to the rate of teacher burnout, attrition, and turnover that is an issue in schools across the country (Strauss, 2017). While the sorts of relationship-building and performance of affective labor that I have discussed throughout these chapters can provide an avenue for finding satisfaction and fulfillment in the teaching career, the high demand and exertion of care labor has been known to differentially contribute to burnout and turnover rates among some populations of teachers (Zhang & Zhu, 2008; Kinman et. al., 2011). As we can see, understanding the what teachers find valuable and fulfilling is a nontrivial feat; it has become clear throughout this thesis that getting to the bottom of what teachers consider valuable in their career is crucial to addressing the larger issues that teachers and students face in the education system in this country.

Conclusion

As we have seen, my interlocutors prioritize their affective labor and the relational aspects of their work as teachers. These elements are emphasized through their descriptions of their efforts in the role of teacher in students' lives, their conceptualizations of what motivates them and satisfies them in their career, their understanding of the rewards they receive, and their grievances about the system of education in which they work.

Some of these elements of affective labor and care that my interlocutors express may seem intuitive or expected, especially for readers who have grown up in contexts in which their educators regularly perform these forms of labor/care. However, it is not necessarily implicit in the role of the teacher to interpret and perform their roles in this manner. In theory, it is the job of the teacher to teach their students assigned material. Thus, teachers' decision to perform affective labor is either a choice on their part, an expectation placed upon them, or, as I argue, some complex combination of the two that creates a role in which the teacher is not only expected to convey course-related content to their students, but to foster their development and support their personhood through the affective labor described and emphasized in this thesis. By analyzing these teachers' descriptions of their work, we have come to understand more about what motivates them and helps them find meaning in their career, thus lending insight into potential avenues toward approaching issues that face teachers, such as the institutionalization of neoliberal values in public schools, teacher burnout, and teacher turnover.

I have argued that teachers emphasize affective labor and the relationships they build through that labor because, in some ways, they feel a certain obligation to that labor, as seen in the feelings of singularity expressed in Chapter 1, and because this labor and their relationships with students are what they find personally rewarding, as we saw in

Chapters 1 and 2. But then in Chapter 3, we saw that these teachers feel that the structure of the school and expectations of their time in labor limit their ability to perform affective and care labor with a student-centered focus in the way that they want to. In the process, teachers resist the "temptations all practitioners confront: to just 'cover' the material in a mechanical fashion…; to accept low expectations of one's students…; to abandon public expectations and do what one pleases…" (Hansen, 1995, p. 151). Their emphasis of affective labor and student-centered relationships also challenges the neoliberal demands of their work with students in today's high schools.

Again, it is possible that teachers do not implement a wholly student-centered mindset in their classroom—I did not conduct observations, and so I did not observe teachers prioritizing affective labor over other forms of labor in the classroom. Instead, these teachers made a *choice* in an *interview* with a familiar outsider to emphasize this particular form of labor. Teachers could have made this choice for a variety of reasons, including the idea that perhaps academic labors are intuitive or expected of teachers, so in an interview about their career and what they value most in their work, they want to emphasize a form of their labor that they may feel is undervalued or underappreciated by outsiders. Given that the majority of my interlocutors are male, it is also possible that due to the nature of affective/care work as a particularly feminized form of labor, these teachers, especially the male teachers, feel the need to explicitly and publicly reclaim this labor that is typically relegated to the private sphere, as a way of cultivating a sense of vocation (Hansen, 1995) in their career. In contrast to some common discourses that devalue and degrade of their career, these teachers invoke vocational messages, and thus call "attention to the individual's sense of agency. It implies that the person knows something about him- or herself, something important, valuable, worth acting on" (Hansen, 1995, p. 10). Thus,

by conceptualizing their work in a vocational framework, these teachers emphasize that they make a deliberate choice to engage in feminized forms of labor because it is what they truly care about, and where they find personal value in their work with students.

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APPENDIX

1. Suggestions for further research:

♦ While I did not incorporate teachers' descriptions of outsiders' reactions upon learning that my interlocutor is a teacher into the body of this thesis, an entire project could be devoted to analyzing people's reactions to learning that someone is a teacher and what that reveals about external messages about teachers and teaching

♦ The theme of feelings of singularity begs the question of feedback mechanisms: teachers don't have the opportunity to observe each other very much; thus, further study on collaboration versus isolation between teachers at the same school or in the same district could yield significant results about "mutual isolation of teachers and the resulting loss of valuable knowledge" (Lortie, 1975, p. xi) and lead to meaningful policy recommendations

♦ The fields of educational and anthropological research could benefit from discourse analysis on teachers' interactions with students and the multidirectionality of benefits between student and teacher

♦ A similar research project with teachers in small towns, different countries, etc. could reveal whether context change could actually allow teachers to transcend neoliberal and other constraints placed on their performance of the labor they find most valuable

♦ Two teachers at lower-income schools expressed critiques of the school system that related directly to socioeconomic and racial inequity, and I wonder how conducting this research in different school environments (i.e. interviewing teachers that teach specifically in high-need schools) could change answers to questions like "what do you wish change you could change about teaching" how they view the system, their place within it, etc.

2. An answer to my initial curiosity

The research I conducted for thesis answered many of the questions that I had about teaching—including answers to those I did not necessarily examine closely in my writing, but those I held in my personal life about my future in teaching. One such answer in particular came from Ms. Frizzle. Throughout my research and in deeper senior-year-pondering of my life path, I found my anxieties mounting as I considered the difficulties of teaching, especially as my former science teachers' comment (the one that inspired this research) still lingered in my head. One of Ms. Frizzle's comments spoke to my anxieties, and reassured me that some difficult things—especially teaching—are worth it. I thank all of my interlocutors for their gracious participation in my research, and for providing me with some much-appreciated teacher wisdom along the way. I will close with the comments from Ms. Frizzle:

> "I think there's a whole idea of 'those who can, do; and those who can't, teach.' And I think that's still really prevalent. Even among teachers sometimes, which is weird to me. And I think that a lot of teachers say that to students because they think that their road is hard. And I just don't think that's a reason that you—like it's admirable even if it's hard. Right? So I'd rather go for more realistic perspectives, and be like, "Hey, the job is tough. But it's worth doing. Right? And it's worth doing well.""