THE EMOTIONAL LIVES OF TEACHERS

by

LAUREN E. SHUMAKER

(Under the Direction of Ajay Sharma)

ABSTRACT

This research seeks to add to our understanding of high poverty elementary school teachers' emotional work lives by investigating how the emotional experiences and coping strategies of teachers related to their beliefs about their work, themselves and their work relationships. I conducted a qualitative study in which I interviewed 36 high poverty elementary school teachers about their emotional work lives. Three emotional identities emerged from teachers' accounts of their emotional experiences of work and ways of coping with their work emotions: *thrivers, survivors* and *sufferers.* These teachers shared similar beliefs about their work, professional identities and work aspirations. What most distinguished the emotional experiences and coping of thrivers, survivors and sufferers was their relationships with their administrators and their ability to realize their work beliefs. In particular, the amount of respect, trust, support and appreciation teachers perceived themselves to have from their administrators influenced their perceptions of their working conditions, their ability to enact their work beliefs, their work relationships with others and their commitment to their school.

The findings of this research illuminate the centrality of administrator-teacher relations to teachers' emotional work lives and support the growing body of empirical literature that asserts school working conditions, rather than characteristics of the students themselves, play a central

role in teacher satisfaction and teacher turnover in high poverty schools. The findings of this study also underscore the importance of the amount of control teachers have in their work to their emotional experience of it. The more teachers felt deprived of the flexibility and autonomy to do their jobs well, the more negative their emotional work experiences, the less successful they felt in their work and the less committed they were to remaining in their school. The findings of this study suggest school leaders and policy makers can improve the success of high poverty schools by improving the relational conditions in these workplaces.

INDEX WORDS: Teacher emotions, coping, emotion management, work relationships, work beliefs, professional identity, high poverty public schools, school leadership, elementary education, qualitative research

THE EMOTIONAL LIVES OF TEACHERS

by

LAUREN E. SHUMAKER

B.A. Middlebury College, 2005

M.A. Northwestern University, 2009

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2017

THE EMOTIONAL LIVES OF TEACHERS

by

LAUREN E. SHUMAKER

<table>
<tr><td>Major Professor:</td><td>Ajay Sharma</td></tr>
<tr><td>Committee:</td><td>Melissa Freeman</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Joseph Hermanowicz</td></tr>
</table>

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2017

DEDICATION

To my mother

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was possible thanks to many people. First and foremost, I would like to thank the teachers who gave generously of their time and themselves to make this project possible. I am grateful to them for their thoughtfulness, insight and candor, and I stand in admiration of their good-humor, intelligence and commitment to teaching in high poverty schools. Their enthusiasm for and belief in this work enhanced it every step of the way. Thank you.

I am also much indebted to my advisor, Ajay Sharma, for his unflappable calm, wisdom and insight throughout this journey, and to my committee members, Melissa Freeman and Joseph Hermanowicz, for joining this project with enthusiasm and generously providing me with guidance, clarity and support throughout. Interdisciplinary work is exciting, but it also presents a number of unique challenges. I sincerely thank my committee for steering this project through such challenges and for showing me firsthand how great minds from different fields can come together to enhance a scholarly work. I know myself to be the lucky beneficiary of their professionalism, intellectual curiosity and kindness.

I would also like to thank the many professors who guided, supported and advised me through my years as a graduate student, particularly Misha Cahnmann-Taylor, Bob Cappuozzo and Kyung Hwa Lee. Thank you to Joseph Tobin for sitting down with me to share his vast expertise on interviewing teachers. And special thanks to Carolina Acosta-Alzuru for being a precious gift to me throughout the dissertation process. I will be forever grateful for her advice, moral support and friendship.

Thank you, as well, to my friends and family, whose humor, advice and patience were sustaining forces throughout my coursework and dissertation. I am especially grateful to Mike Shumaker, whom I met partway through this adventure and whose support, encouragement and unwavering confidence in me and in this project, through the twists and turns, made its completion possible. It cannot be easy to love a graduate student, and I am sincerely grateful to him for making it seem easy.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, a passionate teacher and researcher for over thirty years, for being one of my first and longest-standing teachers and mentors. Her passion for her work likely inspired this project in more ways than I know, but certainly her encouragement and enthusiasm inspired me to embark on this academic journey. She believed in this work from the beginning, listened patiently as I encountered inevitable bumps in the road and gently pushed me forward when exhaustion set in at the end. I am overwhelmed by her support and love, and I hope everyone has the chance to encounter a teacher like her. I dedicate this dissertation to her.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about the emotional work lives of high poverty public elementary school teachers. My interest in this topic was born out of my own experience as a teacher, which bears brief mentioning here since it played a central role in the genesis of this research. For five years, I taught in a public elementary school that was situated in a neighborhood of high poverty in the southeastern United States. Initially, I loved my work. It was challenging, but highly rewarding. I enjoyed strong relationships with my students, colleagues, administrators and my students' parents, and I felt I was able to make a difference in the lives of my students. My work demanded quick-thinking, creativity, ingenuity, and the ability to juggle multiple roles and responsibilities. On any given day, I was some combination of academic instructor, manager, mentor, advisor, surrogate parent, colleague, teammate, detective and employee. Fulfilling these roles contributed to the joy I derived from being a "teacher." The physical conditions of my work were not ideal: my classroom was a tilted metal trailer that was home to small critters, an ever-present dampness and intermittent air conditioning, which resulted in sweltering temperatures during the warmest months of the school year. But the enthusiasm of my students, the support of my colleagues and administrators, the unpredictability of each day and the feeling that I engaged in work that mattered made these physical drawbacks seem insignificant.

My feelings about my work began to change in my third year of teaching. A change in leadership at my school precipitated a number of other changes to my work. My new principal's beliefs about what was best for my students differed drastically from my own, and there seemed

an inherent incompatibility between meeting her expectations and acting in the way I believed best for my students. The centrality of standardized tests to my work clashed with what I believed constituted meaningful teaching and learning. I was frustrated by how little control I had over what or how I taught my students, and I was discouraged by the amount of blame assigned to my colleagues and me regarding our work, despite how little understanding many people seemed to have of it. I found myself struggling to find the joy and enthusiasm I once felt for my work, which further frustrated me.

During this period, I began to wonder about the emotional work lives of other high poverty elementary school teachers. Clearly not all teachers in this setting were discouraged or disillusioned by their work; presumably a number of them continue to derive pleasure and meaning from it. How did they experience and make sense of our work? How did they cope with their work experiences? It was these questions that eventually led to this dissertation.

Why Study Teachers' Emotions?

As you read this, you might be wondering why anyone should care about teachers' emotional work lives. This is an excellent question. Literature from a variety of disciplines and perspectives has found that our emotions are inextricably tied to our thoughts (Damasio, 1994; Denzin, 1984; Lazarus, 1991; Scheff, 1988; Zembylas, 2003). This means our emotions play a crucial role in how we understand ourselves and the social world (Denzin, 1984; Fields, Copp, & Kleinman, 2006; Lazarus, 1991; Scheff, 1988). Research also suggests our emotions are central to how we act in a given context and the relationships we form with others (Copp, 1998; Hochschild, 1983; Weiss, 1990). If our emotions shape who we are and what we do, including how we interact with others, then our emotions can be an indispensable key to understanding

how we experience and engage with our work and whether we choose to continue performing it (Copp, 1998; Hochschild, 1983).

For this reason, emotions have garnered great interest among researchers in a variety of occupational settings (Copp, 1998; Hochschild, 1983; Pierce, 1995). As I explored existing educational literature related specifically to teachers' emotions, I found a growing body of research from a wide range of theoretical perspectives (Frenzel, Becker-Kurz, Pekrun, & Goetz., 2015; Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2003). A sizable body of this most recent literature is from a psychological perspective. This work draws on quantitative methods to investigate teachers' emotional appraisals, emotional regulation processes, strategies for coping with difficult emotions and the frequency and intensity of teachers' emotions in the classroom (Chang, 2009; Chang, 2013; Frenzel et al., 2015; Richards, 2012). However, this literature provides little in-depth understanding of the *subjective* emotional experience of teaching as work.

A separate, theoretically diverse body of literature draws on qualitative methods to investigate teachers' emotions. Much of this research focuses on specific emotional experiences of teachers, for example, teachers' experiences of anger (Bullough, 2009; Liljestrom, Roulston, & deMarrais, 2007; Sutton, 2007), pride (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991; Nias, 1989), enjoyment (Nias, 1989; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003), anxiety (Sutton et al., 2003) and guilt (Bullough, 2009; Hargreaves et al., 1991). A relatively large body of the qualitative literature on teachers' emotions also investigates teachers' emotional reactions to domestic and international educational reform efforts to increase accountability and raise student achievement in public schools (Bottery, 2003; Kelchtermans, 2009; Little, 1996; van Veen & Sleegers, 2009).

To my surprise, in my exploration of the existing literature on teachers' emotional lives, I discovered no studies that explored teachers' subjective emotional experiences of work

specifically in the context of high poverty public schools. There is a sizable body of empirical literature from an occupational perspective on teachers' work in high poverty schools, but teachers' emotional experiences arise only incidentally in this literature, they do not serve as a central focus. Nearly all of this literature relies on quantitative methods to investigate the connection between working conditions, teacher satisfaction and turnover in high poverty schools (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Grissom, 2011; Simon & Johnson., 2015). Similar to the existing psychological literature on teachers' emotions, this occupational literature provides little detailed understanding of the subjective emotional experience of teaching in this setting.

These gaps in existing literature on teachers' work lives is problematic, because research suggests that work context heavily influences workers' subjective experiences of work (see Hermanowicz, 2009). Teaching in high poverty schools is unique from teaching in other school settings in several ways. High poverty schools are more likely than low poverty schools to have challenging working conditions such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate facilities and classroom materials (Ingersoll, 2003; Simon et al., 2015). Helping students of poverty make academic progress in the classroom often first necessitates confronting issues related to students' difficult social and economic circumstances. These students are more likely to experience hunger and homelessness, suffer from inadequate healthcare and to live in unsafe neighborhoods than their more affluent peers (Gorski, 2007). While outside the realm of teachers' official responsibilities, many teachers in these schools become heavily involved in the personal welfare of their students, recognizing that students' basic needs must be met before they can concentrate on academic learning. Research indicates teachers of high poverty students play an especially important role in their students' learning (Downey, Hippel, & Hughes, 2009), yet researchers

using achievement-based measures continue to report teachers in high poverty schools are less

effective at promoting student achievement than their colleagues in low poverty schools

(Grissom, 2011; Ost, 2014). Such findings contribute to a dominant narrative that teachers in

high poverty schools are not adequately performing their work (Downey et al., 2009), and

teachers in this setting must contend with this narrative as they perform their daily work.

Two disturbing findings regarding high poverty schools have emerged from education

research in recent years. First, teachers in this setting report the highest levels of work-related

stress in the teaching profession (Richards, 2012). Second, these teachers leave their schools in

the highest numbers each school year (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014; Johnson, Kraft &

Papay, 2012). This teacher stress and turnover is problematic for several reasons. High turnover

has been found to be detrimental to students (Ronfeldt, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2013) and makes it

difficult to attract experienced teachers to low-income schools (Johnson, 1990; Ingersoll, 2003;

Simon et al., 2015). It is expensive and time consuming to replace the teachers who leave their

schools each year (Ingersoll, 2003). Additionally, high turnover hinders the development of a

strong, collegial school culture and a unified school mission (Simon et al., 2015).

As the number of schools serving students of poverty in the U.S. grows larger each year

(Ingersoll et al., 2014)—a report released by the Southern Education Foundation found that more

than half of children in U.S. public schools in the 2012-2013 school year lived in poverty (Rich,

2015)—the high rates of reported stress and teacher turnover in this context are particularly

troubling. Investigating the emotional lives of teachers working in schools of high poverty can

increase our understanding of teacher stress and turnover in this setting.

Elementary school teachers, in particular, face high emotional demands in this context.

Elementary school students are dependent on the adults in their lives in a number of ways, and

particularly in a high poverty setting, these students often depend on their teachers for support and assistance. Their dependence can contribute to the emotional challenge of teaching in a high poverty elementary school. Thus, high poverty elementary schools present an excellent opportunity to study the emotional experiences and ways of coping of workers under particularly emotionally demanding conditions.

This study seeks to partially fill the void in our understanding of the emotional lives of teachers working in public elementary schools of high poverty. I will examine how public elementary school teachers serving predominantly students of poverty experience and cope with their work emotions. Two research questions motivate this study. The first pertains to the subjective experience of these teachers' work:

1. How do teachers emotionally experience their daily work in public elementary schools that predominately serve students of poverty?

This question addresses the activities that absorb teachers' energies and the feelings that arise for teachers as they go about their daily work. The second question addresses how teachers understand and handle the feelings that arise in their daily work. Specifically:

2. How do public elementary school teachers working in schools of high poverty interpret and cope with their work-related feelings?

Through this question, I will explore the way these teachers maintain their balance and focus at work and the relationships that support and sustain them. This study is unique among the study of teachers' emotional lives in that it explores teachers' emotions in a specific setting—high poverty public elementary schools— and investigates not only the emotions experienced by teachers, but also how they make sense of and negotiate their emotions in the course of their daily work.

Contributions

This study will attempt to offer several contributions to our existing knowledge of teachers' work lives and speaks to several audiences. First, this study offers a contribution to two bodies of educational literature, the study of teachers' emotions and the study of high poverty schools, by filling existing gaps in our understanding of the emotional lives of teachers in high poverty schools. We have little systematic understanding of how teachers working in this occupational setting emotionally experience their daily work or make sense of and negotiate their work related feelings. This work can deepen our understanding of the high rates of teacher stress, burnout and attrition in high poverty schools (Ingersoll et al, 2014; Simon et al., 2015). Large scale, quantitative survey studies of teacher stress and coping (Richards, 2012) provide a sketch of the emotionally draining nature of teaching in a high poverty setting and how some teachers cope with their work-related stress, but these quantitative studies provide us with little detailed understanding of teachers' actual emotional experiences of their work or how these experiences shape teachers' ways of negotiating their work. A qualitative study of teachers' emotional lives can deepen our understanding of these phenomena and provide a theoretical connection between teachers' emotions and experiences of stress, burnout and turnover.

A second contribution of this study is to teachers by raising their voices in scholarly and political debates about their profession and providing insight into some of the most challenging schools in our country from the perspective of the individuals intimately connected to them. Teachers' voices are often missing entirely or are quickly dismissed in academic and political conversations about their work (Ingersoll, 2003; Nias, 1996), yet it is imperative that we examine teachers' emotional work lives from their perspective in order to better understand what goes on in these schools and why. Gaining insight into the emotional experiences of teachers in these

schools from the perspective of the teachers themselves has implications for the vitality of high poverty schools. It can shed light on the ways teachers successfully manage their emotions such that they remain in and even thrive in these schools. Educational leaders and policy makers, armed with a better understanding of how teachers experience, understand and negotiate their work in high poverty schools, may consider ways they can better support these teachers in their daily work such that a larger number of individuals are able to make satisfying careers in this setting.

A final contribution of this study is to the sociological study of workers' emotions by deepening our understanding of how workers emotionally experience and cope with their work emotions within a challenging professional context. By offering a glimpse into the emotional work lives of individuals who operate daily in challenging, high-stakes conditions, it is possible this study will contribute to our broader understanding of how workers in challenging contexts, i.e.: police officers (Manning, 1977; Martin, 1999), high steel workers (Haas, 1977), disability workshop managers (Copp, 1998), businessmen (Weiss, 1990) and litigators and paralegals (Pierce, 1995) emotionally experience, interpret and negotiate their work. Some individuals manage to successfully make a career in difficult work circumstances while others leave the profession or remain, but are discouraged and disillusioned (Copp, 1998; Hochschild, 1983; Pierce, 1995). This study will illuminate distinctions between how individual experiences, interpretations and ways of coping with work feelings vary *within* a specific occupational context.

Through careful exploration of the processes by which teachers experience, interpret and negotiate their work emotions, this study seeks to reveal the emotional complexity of teaching as work in high poverty public elementary schools and challenge some commonly held assumptions

of teaching and teachers in this setting that exist in our society. The aim of this work is not to valorize or demonize individual teachers or the setting in which they work, but rather, through a rich exploration of these teachers' work lives, to strengthen our understanding of the world of teaching in high poverty schools.

Theoretic Foundations

This study is situated at the intersection of three distinct bodies of academic work: the sociological study of workers' emotional lives, the educational study of teachers' emotions and the educational study of schools of poverty, each of which provide theoretical guidance for this study. In the following section, I explain the five interrelated concepts that form the theoretical foundation of this study: *emotional experience, identity, work beliefs, relationships* and *emotional coping*.

Emotional Experience

Emotion. A primary theoretic focus of this study is the construct we call *emotion*. Emotion has been of interest to theorists in the fields of philosophy and psychology for centuries, but its exploration in the discipline of sociology is a much more recent endeavor. Despite its relative newness, the sociological study of emotion has much to offer the present work. In particular, I draw on an interactionist approach to study emotion, because it allows me to explore how teachers subjectively interpret, or *make meaning*, of their emotional experiences (Fields et al., 2006). From this perspective, emotion can be understood as:

> . . . a biologically given sense, and our most important one. Like other senses—
> hearing, touch, and smell—it is a means by which we know about our relation to the
> world, and it is therefore crucial for the survival of human beings in group life. Emotion
> is unique among the senses, however, because it is related not only to an orientation

toward *action*, but also to an orientation toward *cognition*. (Hochschild, 1983, p. 229, emphasis in original)

… a social, interactional, linguistic, and physiological process that draws its resources from the human body, from human consciousness, and from the world that surrounds the person. (Denzin, 1984, p. 31)

As revealed in these definitions, emotions are more than mere physiological responses to stimuli. They involve appraisal and interpretation. Interactionists assume we construct our understanding of reality, which means objects and events do not hold intrinsic meaning outside of the meaning assigned to them by an individual (Blumer, 1969). Our thoughts and emotions are inextricably linked in our individual creation of meaning (Fields et al., 2006). This process of meaning creation does not occur in a vacuum, but rather, in the social world. Our emotions, then, must always be understood as situated in the social world and arising through social interactions; we cannot separate our emotional experiences from the contexts in which they occur (Denzin, 1984; Hochschild, 1983; Kemper, 2000; Scheff, 1988). Following Denzin (1984) and Hochschild (1983), in the present work I view emotions as dynamic, interwoven processes that arise out of interactions in an individuals' social world. This understanding of emotion benefits this study in two significant ways: it allows for the interwoven nature of cognition and emotion, and it emphasizes the role of *context* in the study of emotion.

Emotions may be experienced privately, for example, when a teacher experiences a moment of shame after losing her temper with a student, or they may be experienced collectively, as when a group of teachers feel anger at a mandated reform policy they do not believe is in the best interest of their students. For the purposes of this study, I use *emotion* and *feeling* interchangeably. In much of emotion literature, a distinction is drawn between *emotion*

and *mood* or *affect.* Following Fineman (2000), I conceptualize *emotion* as short-term and attached to a particular event or object in relation to the *self.* A teacher, from this perspective, may experience anger (emotion) when an administrator mistreats a colleague (event) or pride (emotion) at a student's final essay (object). This conceptualization contrasts from a *mood,* which is a lingering feeling not tied to a particular event or object (Fineman, 2000).

Stress. Workplace *stress* is related to one's emotional state and has received a great deal of attention in education literature on teachers' work. Workplace stress is not itself negative (Smylie, 1999), but the focus in nearly all teacher stress literature has been on its negative effects. While the focus of this study is on teachers' emotional experiences of work, including both positive and negative experiences, a clear definition of the more general negative experience of *stress* is helpful since some participants refer to this concept in their interpretations of their work lives. Social psychology and occupational literature provide a useful conceptualization of stress. Working from a social psychology perspective, Kyriacou (2001) defines *teacher stress* as "… the experience by a teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher" (p. 28). This definition benefits the present study, because it links the general construct of *stress* to specific emotions experienced by an individual teacher. Working from an organizational perspective, Cherniss (1980) provides a helpful means for understanding when and why an individual experiences stress in the workplace. He asserts environments make particular demands of individuals at the same time that those individuals attempt to influence their environment to meet their personal needs and values. When an individual interprets this imbalance as negative, the individual experiences stress. The particular level or amount of stress experienced by the individual depends on how the individual interprets his/her environment.

Burnout. Teacher stress can lead to the experience of *burnout*. While not a primary focus in this study, a definition of this concept is beneficial since it arises in several participants' interpretations of their emotional experiences of work. The term burnout was originally created by Freudenberger (1974) to describe the physical and psychological depletion of healthcare workers, and it continues to be commonly associated with human service workers (Byrne, 1999). There is no one universally accepted definition of this concept, but the term commonly represents an individual's response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing with others in need over an extended period of time (Byrne, 1999). Kyriacou (2001) defines *teacher burnout* as " . . . a state of emotional, physical and attitudinal exhaustion which may develop in teachers who have been unsuccessful in coping effectively with stress over a long time" (p. 28). Many empirical studies of teachers' work draw on the three-part model of Maslach and Jackson (1981) to conceptualize burnout. For Maslach and Jackson (1981), teacher burnout consists of*: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization* and *reduced personal accomplishment*. Emotional exhaustion involves the stress experienced by a teacher, and refers to her feelings of being overextended, drained of her emotional resources and worn out. Emotional exhaustion leads to feelings of depersonalization, a teacher's evaluation of her response to people in her care (i.e.: students) that is excessively detached or negative. Reduced personal accomplishment is a teacher's self-evaluation marked by decreased achievement, withdrawal and inability to cope with work. Research indicates this component arises separately from emotional exhaustion and feelings of depersonalization. Burnout is closely linked in education literature to teachers' perceptions of personal control and social support in their school (Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999). Maslach and Jackson's (1981) model of burnout presented burnout as an individual problem, but Maslach has since built on this model to include the crucial influence of

environmental factors in the experience of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1999). Most literature on teacher burnout views the phenomenon as an interaction between personal and environmental factors (Huberman et al., 1999; Smylie, 1999; Woods, 1999), and I draw on this interactional conceptualization to understand burnout in the present work.

Identity

An individual's *identity* can be thought of as a set of meanings attached to the *self*, and our understandings of ourselves play an important role in our construction of reality (Prasad, 2005). Mead (1934) theorized individuals are capable of simultaneously seeing themselves as the originator of action (the subject, or "I") as well as the object of action ("Me") (Mead, 1934). In other words, we are able to "see" ourselves in social situations, and this ability is fundamental to understanding individual sense-making and our construction of reality. Cooley (1902) described this phenomenon as the *looking-glass self*. Our capacity to see ourselves in social situations allows us to consciously choose how we act in those situations (Prasad, 2005). We continuously adjust and adapt our *selves* to mirror our understanding of the way others view us (Prasad, 2005). In this way, the self is a continuously evolving, dynamic social process (Fields et al., 2006), and self and society exist in an interactive relationship rather than as independent entities (Prasad, 2005). Individuals are aware of the social roles they are expected to play, and they monitor their *selves* in keeping with social norms. Each of us takes on a number of different roles in our daily lives, and these roles form the basis of the identities that help us shape our understanding of reality (Prasad, 2005). An individual often holds multiple identities, i.e., teacher, mother, sister and wife (Stets & Trettevik, 2014). Particular identities may emerge as more salient in different social situations (Prasad, 2005).

Denzin (1984) places the *self* squarely at the center of emotion. An individual may feel anger, sadness, fear or joy, but in each of these cases the experienced emotion is a process that refers back to the self. This means we *are* our emotions, and understanding emotion is crucial to understanding a person (Denzin, 1984). The emotions we feel are influenced by the actions others take toward us as well as the emotional attitudes and judgments about ourselves we perceive from others (Denzin, 1984).

Identity theorists have explored the cognitive and behavioral strategies individuals use to cope with the negative emotions that result from identity incongruence (Stets et al., 2014). These researchers have found when an individual cannot confirm an identity, she will likely leave the situation or alter her behavior, perceptions, or identity to conform to what she perceives to be the view of others (Turner & Stets, 2006). An individual experiences positive emotions, such as pride and satisfaction, when others verify her identity, and she experiences negative emotions such as guilt, shame or anger when others do not confirm this identity (Turner et al., 2006).

If negative emotions exist over an extended period of time, individuals may reduce their commitment to a particular identity or change its meaning to align more closely with the feedback they perceive from others (Stets et al., 2014). An individual who strongly identifies as an exemplary teacher, for example, but consistently receives feedback from peers and students that she is not very effective, will likely experience a negative emotion as a result of this identity incongruence. If she cannot change her particular work situation (i.e.: move to a school with peers and students who hold a positive view of her teaching ability), the negative emotions she experiences from identity incongruence will likely reduce her view of herself to a merely competent teacher over time, or, if she fully aligns her identity with the feedback she receives from others, she will come to see herself as an ineffective teacher. Interactionists believe people

try to create and maintain identities that make them feel good about themselves, even if they ultimately do not succeed in this effort (Prasad, 2005). One way teachers may negotiate their work-related emotions is by redefining their professional identity and relationship to their work, but there can be emotional consequences to cognitive redefinitions of the self (Fields et al., 2006).

In a study of English primary school teachers, Nias (1989) found teachers' subjective experiences of work depended on their identification with or rejection of their role as teacher. While not all teachers incorporate a professional identity into their self-image, most teachers invest heavily of their *selves* in their work (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989; van Veen & Sleegers, 2009). Research indicates teachers who strongly identify with their role as a teacher are most at risk of experiencing stress in their work (Nias, 1989; Rudow, 1999; Woods, 1999). Nias (1989) found teachers who do not identify with their occupational role tend to lose interest in the profession or pursue a parallel career.

Caring is part of many teachers' professional identity (Bullough, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003; Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1999). Teachers often view their relationships with students as personal, not just the result of legal obligation and accountability (Lortie, 1975; Ingersoll, 2003; Nias, 1989, 1999). For many teachers, their sense of moral responsibility to their students extends beyond scholastic endeavors to include students' physical, social and emotional well-being (Day & Qing, 2009; Ingersoll, 2003; Nias, 1989, 1999). Teachers' caring identity can lead them to take on a parenting role in the lives of their students (Liljestrom et al., 2007). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, research indicates elementary school teachers have a particularly strong commitment to care in their work (Hargreaves et al., 1991; Nias, 1989). Aspects of teachers' work that conflict with teachers' professional identity and caring ethos can alter their

commitment to their work (McLaughlin, 1993). Identity plays an important role in the present study because it can serve as a powerful motivating force behind emotion (Stets et al., 2014; Turner et al., 2006). Understanding teachers' views of themselves can illuminate why and how teachers negotiate their feelings and engage with their work.

Work Beliefs

Teachers hold particular beliefs about their work, and there is a significant body of empirical literature that suggests teachers' subjective emotional experiences of work are influenced by their ability to enact their personal work beliefs (Jeffrey & Woods, 1996; Marshall & Ball, 1999; Nias, 1999; van den Berg, 2002). Teachers beliefs about their work relate to how they believe they should teach their students, what they want to accomplish in their work and their role as a teacher. For many teachers, these beliefs reveal a *moral purpose* in their work. Woods (1999) explains, "People teach because they believe in something. They have an image of the 'good society'" (p. 129). When teachers betray their work beliefs, this betrayal can result in feelings of inauthenticity that lead to identity conflict (van den Berg, 2002; van Veen et al., 2009), strong feelings of guilt (Hargreaves et al., 1991), anger and frustration (Hargreaves, 1998; Liljestrom et al., 2007; Nias, 1999); a loss of respect for oneself (Jeffrey et al., 1996; Woods, 1999) and a lost *sense* of self (Marshall et al., 1999; Nias, 1991). Teachers' beliefs about their work serves as an important theoretical anchor in the present study, because what teachers believe about their work can influence their emotional work experiences and how they interpret and negotiate those emotional experiences.

Relationships

Some researchers have argued teachers leave high poverty schools in favor of low poverty schools due to characteristics of the students themselves (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin,

2004). However, a growing body of literature grounded in organizational theory runs counter to this narrative, asserting social working conditions, particularly relationships with colleagues (Ingersoll, 2003; Simon et al., 2015), parents (Allensworth, et al., 2009) and administrators (Allensworth et al., 2009; Grissom, 2011; Ingersoll, 2003; Simon et al., 2015), most heavily influence teacher turnover.

Findings from teacher emotion literature also emphasize the importance of relationships to teachers' experiences of work. Day et al. (2009) found positive colleague relationships can serve as a sustaining emotional resource as teachers encounter increasing challenges and complexity in their job. Bullough (2009) and Nias (1989) found teachers describe their relationships with colleagues as a source of enjoyment in their work. Other research indicates relationships with students are central to teachers' enjoyment of their work (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000; Lortie, 1975; McLaughlin, 1993; Nias, 1989). Teacher stress and burnout literature indicates social support in schools can protect teachers from experiencing burnout (Byrne, 1999; Huberman et al., 1999; Leithwood, Menzies, Jantzi & Leithwood, 1999; Smylie, 1999). In particular, supportive leadership is negatively associated with stress-related illness and burnout among teachers (Leithwood et al., 1999; Smylie, 1999).

Together these bodies of literature indicate relationships play a crucial role in a teacher's subjective experience of work. For this reason, teachers' relationships with colleagues, administrators, parents and students become an important theoretical anchor in the present work.

Coping with Emotions

Our emotions also play a crucial role in understanding our day-to-day negotiations and ways of coping with our work experiences (Fields et al., 2006; Hochschild, 1983). The study of how workers cope with their emotions owes much to Arlie Hochschild's (1983) groundbreaking

work on emotional lives of flight attendants and bill collectors. Hochschild was interested in understanding how workplace culture shapes individuals' experiences, interpretations and expressions of their emotions. She found culture dictates the roles we play in our work lives, and we are guided by cultural beliefs and norms about the feelings we should experience and express in our social interactions at work. While we have some dramatic license in how we play our work roles, we cannot venture too far from cultural beliefs and norms without suffering emotional consequences (Hochschild, 1983).

Hochschild distinguished between *displayed* and *subjective* emotions in her work. *Displayed emotions* are emotions we express to others; they are on display for the world to see. These emotions are strongly influenced by social norms and the impression of ourselves we hope to present to others (Hochschild, 1983). *Subjective emotions* are our privately experienced feelings, and these emotions are also influenced by cultural norms and social conventions. Creating and sustaining the appropriate feeling at work requires managing one's private feelings, a concept Hochschild (1983) labeled *emotion work*. S*ubjective emotions* and *emotion work* are the theoretical contributions of Hochschild that are most relevant to the present study. These constructs provide guidance in understanding the ways individuals cope with their private work emotions. Hochschild distinguished two types of emotion work: *surface acting* and *deep acting*. *Surface acting* occurs when an individual intentionally displays an institutionally appropriate emotion that she does not feel. For example, a teacher engages in surface acting when she smiles at a parent for whom she privately feels contempt. Hochschild referred to this gap between the emotion the teacher feels and the emotion the teacher displays as *emotional dissonance*. *Deep acting* occurs when an individual actually tries to alter her underlying feeling to align with her organization's expectations. In the situation of the disliked parent, the teacher may reflect on

how much effort this parent exerts to stay involved in his child's school life in a way that allows her to alter her underlying feeling of contempt for the parent to one of respect. The smile she displays to the parent can subsequently feel the result of a genuine emotion (respect). Hochschild found the type of emotion work flight attendants engaged in greatly impacted how they experienced their work. Specifically, she found their ways of negotiating their emotions through surface or deep acting influenced whether and how they experienced occupational burnout. It is difficult for an individual to sustain emotional dissonance over long periods of time, and Hochschild believed emotional dissonance resulted in long-term consequences for individuals' well-being. She also found workers' inability to manage their work emotions detrimentally impacted their job performance.

Researchers have built on Hochschild's work to explore the emotional lives of workers in a number of challenging human service contexts: Rafaeli & Sutton (1990) studied how clerks manage encounters with impatient or rude customers; Pierce (1995) studied the emotional lives of litigators and paralegals in corporate law firms; Wharton (1996) explored how service workers deal with highly emotional encounters with clients; Raz (1997) studied the emotion management of Tokyo Disneyland tour guides; Copp (1998) explored the emotional impact of work supervisors in a sheltered workshop for people with disabilities; and Martin (1999) explored the emotional coping mechanisms police officers. Copp's (1998) study is of particular relevance to the present work, because she found when workers could not successfully manage their emotions, they experienced burnout or left their job altogether. Consistent with Hochschild's assertion regarding the negative long-term effects of surface acting, more recent research indicates workers who regularly engage in surface acting experience higher levels of stress and emotional exhaustion than workers whose jobs demand less surface acting (Grandey, 2003;

Wang, Seibert, & Boles, 2011; Zapf & Holz, 2006). In their meta-analysis of emotional labor

research, Wang et al. (2011) found deep acting was positively associated with well-being and

had no association with negative outcomes.

Teachers' ways of coping their inner feelings is an important theoretical anchor in the

present work, because such emotional negotiations can illuminate how workers in the same

occupational setting may experience their work in different ways. How teachers cope with their

emotions may provide insight into why some teachers experience stress and burnout in high

poverty schools while others do not.
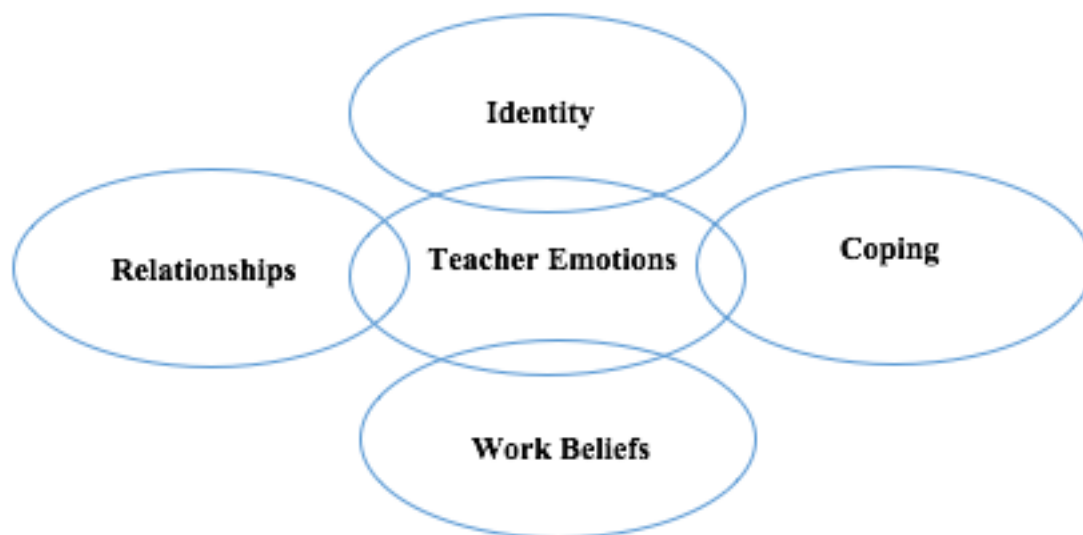
Figure 1: Theoretical Framework for Teachers' Emotional Work Lives

Summary

The theoretical framework for this study, as depicted in Figure 1., presents five

interrelated concepts on which I draw to investigate the emotional lives of high poverty public

elementary school teachers. This framework allows me to assume teachers' emotions are interpretative, dynamic processes that exist between the individual teacher and the context in which she works (Copp, 1998; Fields et al., 2006; Hochschild, 1983). Teachers' emotions are embedded in and shaped by their beliefs about their work; their interactions with the students, teachers, administrators and parents who are part of their professional lives; their work identity; and their ways of negotiating their work. This framework assumes the interaction between the individual teacher and the setting in which that teacher works creates a subjective emotional experience of work that informs and is informed by a teacher's work identity, beliefs, relationships, and coping strategies.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. The first chapter provided an overview of and rationale for this study. I argued the emotional lives of high poverty elementary school teachers presents an important and underexplored topic in social science literature, and I proposed to partially fill this gap through a qualitative investigation of the emotional experiences, interpretations and ways of coping of high poverty public elementary school teachers.

In chapter 2, I explain my research perspective, the research methods and data sources I used in this study. The body of this dissertation examines the emotional lives of each of three groups of high poverty teachers that emerged in this study. In chapter 3, I explore the patterns of emotional experiences and emotional coping strategies of a group of high poverty elementary school teachers who identified as *thrivers*. In chapter 4, I explore the patterns of emotional experiences and emotional coping strategies of a group of high poverty elementary school teachers who identified as *survivors*. And in chapter 5, I explore the patterns of emotional

experiences and emotional coping strategies of a group of high poverty elementary school teachers who identified as *sufferers*.

In the final chapter, I provide an overview of the results of the study, offer an interpretation of the findings, and suggest a model to explain the emotional lives of high poverty public elementary school teachers. I also discuss the implications of this research for school leaders and policy makers. I conclude by recognizing questions raised by this research and making recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I explain my research perspective and the design of the study. I describe the sample of high poverty elementary school teachers on which this research is based, the methods I used and the procedures I followed to learn about the emotional experiences and coping strategies of high poverty elementary school teachers. My goal is to provide the reader with a clear account of the steps I took to produce the present study.

Interactionist Qualitative Research

I approach this study from an interactionist perspective, which holds particular ontological and epistemological assumptions. Interactionists believe knowledge is a socially constructed interpretation (Prasad, 2005). Reality, from this perspective, is always mediated through an individual's understanding of it, and therefore, is always situated and contextual (Mason, 2002). Interactionist research seeks to understand the processes by which individuals subjectively construct this reality (Prasad, 2005). From this perspective, objects and events do not hold intrinsic meaning outside of the meaning assigned to them by an individual (Blumer, 1969). The existence of an identifiable reality is irrelevant to how we should understand and interpret the social world (Mason, 2002). Interactionist research is meaning-centered, and allows for multiple meanings to be present in a given social situation. Individuals' feelings about themselves, others, relationships and work shape the meanings they construct over time (Copp, 1998; Pierce, 1995; Weiss, 1990), and thoughts and emotions are understood as inextricably linked in the individual creation of meaning (Fields et al., 2006). This perspective also assumes

that the knower and the known exist in an interactional relationship (Mason, 2002). Knowledge, in other words, is created and recreated through an interactive process with others. The goal of interactionist research is to gain a deep, nuanced understanding of the lived experiences and social world of individuals from the perspective of the individuals themselves (Prasad, 2005).

Method and Design

This study explores the emotional work experiences and emotional coping strategies of high poverty elementary school teachers. Addressing my primary research questions in this study called for a method to obtain detailed meanings and interpretations of high poverty teachers' emotional work lives. For this reason, the primary source of data I drew on in this study was in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews allow the researcher to understand "the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that lived experience" (Seidman, 2006, p. 9) by examining ordinary human experiences in detailed, fine-grained ways (deMarrais, 2004). These interviews allow participants to speak in detail about their feelings and experiences on a particular topic (Kvale, 1996) and allow " . . . the interactive space and time to enable the research participant's views and insights to emerge" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 85). For these reasons, in-depth interviews provided an ideal method for understanding teachers' emotional experiences of work and how they interpreted and negotiated their work-related feelings.

The Interviews

This study is based on the personal accounts of high poverty elementary school teachers I interviewed between September 2015 and June 2016. I conducted a pilot study with five high poverty elementary school teachers in the fall of 2016. The goal of this study was to learn about issues high poverty elementary school teachers considered most relevant and significant to their work lives and to refine my interview guide to best help me fulfill my research objectives. The

pilot study helped me improve my initial interview guide by combining and in some cases omitting particular questions that were less relevant to teachers' emotional work lives than I anticipated. I also learned more detailed accounts of teachers' identities and beliefs about their work emerged from the stories of their emotional work experiences rather than from direct questions about these topics.

Participants. Following the pilot study, I interviewed 31 teachers for this project between January and June of 2016. I have included this pilot data in the present work, so in total, the views of 36 teachers are represented in this study. All of the teachers in study worked in a high poverty elementary school within the last year. There was nothing magical about this one-year number, but I chose it for two reasons. I assumed that teachers who recently worked in high poverty schools would be able to recall their work experiences with greater detail and accuracy than teachers who were out of the occupation or away from teaching in high poverty schools for a greater period of time. I also wanted teachers' emotional experiences, interpretations and ways of negotiating their work reflect a similar macro-level sociopolitical context. All but one of the participants were currently employed in a high poverty elementary school at the time of our interview; one teacher, who was part of the pilot study, had retired several months prior to our interview.

The sample for my study consisted of 32 women and 4 men. Five of the participants were African Americans, two were Asian, two were Hispanic, one was Eastern-European and the remainder of the participants were white. The age of the teachers ranged from 24 to 63. The number of years of experience of teachers varied from one to thirty years in the profession. Nine teachers held bachelor's degrees, with three anticipating graduating from a master's program before the end of 2016. Seventeen teachers held master's degrees, nine held Specialist degrees

and one teacher held a EdD. Teachers' years of experience in their current district ranged from

one to thirty years, and their years' experience in their current school ranged from one to twenty-

eight years. Table 1 provides an overview of participants' demographics.

Table 1 *Participants' Demographics*

Name	Birth Year	Race/Ethnicity	Highest ed. degree	Undergrad major	Years teaching elem.	Years in district	Years in school	Position
Robin	1979	white	Specialist	elementary education	14	12	12	EIP support
Jill	1953	white	Master's	elementary education	20	12	9	2nd grade
Rachel	1982	white	Specialist	business	9	6	3	4th grade
Tiffany	1972	white	Master's	elementary education	20	17	17	2nd grade
Phyllis	1961	white	Specialist	early childhood	21	21	8	2nd grade
Kathy	1963	white	Master's	early childhood	30	30	28	2nd grade
Alice	1978	Asian	Bachelor's	early childhood	10	10	1	3rd grade
Grace	1983	white	Specialist	early childhood	10	10	10	2nd grade
Nicole	1978	white	Master's	music	15	1	1	4th grade
Andrea	1980	white	Master's	communication	8	8	8	1st grade
Hannah	1986	white	Master's	early childhood	1	1	1	kindergarten
Monica	1983	African American	Bachelor's	elementary education	5	5	5	4th grade
Jacqueline	1992	African American	Bachelor's	early childhood	1	1	1	3rd grade
Carmen	1990	white	Bachelor's	early childhood	1	1	1	4th grade
Carrie	1988	white	Specialist	early childhood	5	3	3	1st grade
Diane	1965	white	Master's	S.S./science education	13	10	3	1st grade
James	1968	African American	Master's	human resources	22	22	6	3rd grade
Mark	1966	white	Specialist	health and physical education	8	8	8	4th grade
Sandra	1986	Asian	Master's	music performance	3	3	3	5th grade
Krystal	1988	African American	Bachelor's	early childhood	3	3	3	3rd grade
Dawn	1982	white	EdD	early childhood	9	9	9	5th grade
Rosa	1977	Hispanic	Specialist	education and psychology	15	15	15	4th grade
Sally	1990	white	Bachelor's	early childhood	2	2	2	2nd grade
Teresa	1983	Hispanic	Master's	education	10	3	3	2nd grade
Peggy	1984	white	Bachelor's	early childhood	9	9	9	kindergarten
Louisa	1972	white	Specialist	elementary education	20	15	2	4th grade
Camilla	1981	Romanian	Bachelor's	early childhood	8	8	2	4th grade
Marquise	1987	African American	Master's	elementary education	4.5	3	3	5th grade
Edward	1984	white	Master's	early childhood	9	7	7	2nd grade
Patricia	1977	white	Master's (x2)	music performance	12	12	11	4th grade
Isabel	1983	white	Bachelor's	elementary education	10	9	1	gifted
Wendy	1975	white	Specialist	early childhood	16	16	2	science special
Karen	1964	white	Master's	elementary education	10	10	10	instructional support
Barbara	1982	white	Master's	early childhood	5	4	4	ESOL
Victoria	1979	white	Master's	early childhood	10	10	10	EIP support
Anna	1983	white	Master's	French and comparative lit.	9	9	9	ESOL

Setting. Since this study explores the emotional experiences and coping strategies of teachers working in schools that predominantly serve students of high poverty, a clear definition for *high poverty* was imperative. A well-recognized method for identifying the relative level of poverty within a school community is the number of students who are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch (Ingersoll, 2003; Johnson et al., 2012). All of the teachers in this study worked in elementary schools in which more than 40% of the students were eligible to receive free and reduced lunch at the time of the interview. This distinction officially qualified the school for federal funding under Title I. However, the majority of the teachers in this study worked in schools with much higher poverty levels than this 40% minimum. Nearly 90% of the teachers worked in schools where over 60% of the students receive free and reduced lunch, and nearly 60% of the teachers worked in schools where over 90% of the students receive free and reduced lunch.

Procedure. I conducted all of the teacher interviews and all interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews ranged in duration from one hour to nearly four hours, averaging about 90 minutes in length. Twenty-seven of the interviews were conducted in-person. In nine cases, a conflict arose for the teacher or the teacher's schedule did not permit an in-person meeting, and we arranged to conduct the interview by phone or video chat.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. I used a combination of snowball sampling and convenience sampling to recruit teachers to participate in this study. In accordance with snowball sampling (deMarrais, 2004), I identified a teacher who fit the selection criteria to serve as the first participant in my study. Upon completion of our interview, I asked the participant to refer me to other teachers who might be willing to participate in my study. At the same time, I reached out to other high poverty elementary school teachers, some of whom I had

worked with in the past as an elementary school teacher or as a pre-service supervisor at a local university. Three teachers I went to school with myself, but we had not worked together in a professional capacity. The remaining teachers I had never met before our interview.

I contacted prospective participants via letter, email or phone to gauge their interest in participation, confirm that they met the selection criteria and provide background information on the study. An example of the contact letter/email and phone script are provided in Appendix B and C, respectively. Both the letter/email and the phone script for prospective participants included the contact information for the human subjects office that oversaw this project at my university. I encouraged prospective participants to reach out to this office if they had any questions about their rights as a research participant.

Recognizing my prospective participants as busy individuals, I attempted to make our interview as convenient for each participant as possible. If a prospective participant met the study criteria and was willing to be interviewed, we met at a time and place chosen by the participant. I continued recruiting participants until data saturation was reached (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). My original intention had been to recruit high poverty elementary school teachers from a range of states across the country, but gaining access to these teachers proved more challenging than I had anticipated. The final group of teachers who participated in this study worked in one of two states, a southern state and a Midwestern state. The notable difference between teaching in these two contexts was the availability of tenure for K-12 public school teachers; tenure was an option in one state and not in the other. This difference did not appear to affect teachers' emotional experiences of their work in substantive ways, as the teachers' experiences were remarkably similar across the two states. Being able to examine the experiences of teachers in two different geographic contexts allowed me to discover teachers'

experiences were more than just localized, isolated phenomenon. I believe this discovery enhances the present work.

To ensure certain themes were addressed in each interview, the interviews I conducted were semi-structured. I worked from the interview guide presented in Appendix D. The interview questions were informed by the pilot study conducted in the fall of 2015, my reading of published research and my own experience as a teacher. The questions in the guide served as a starting point and provided structure for my discussion with teachers, but the tone of the interviews was informal. I allowed the conversation to flow naturally as participants as discussed their work lives, and unexpected themes were permitted to emerge during the interview. Very little probing was necessary for teachers to discuss their emotional experiences of work. Many of the interviews were emotional; over three-quarters of participants cried at least once during the interview. A number of participants said our conversation felt like a form of therapy. At the end of the interview, many thanked me for the opportunity to share their work experiences.

Following the interview, I sent participants a thank you letter to express my appreciation for their time and their insight. An example of this letter appears in Appendix F. This letter also served as a final opportunity to provide participants with my contact information, should they wish to get in touch with me at a future time.

Additional Data Sources

Following each interview, I asked participants to complete a short questionnaire. This post-interview questionnaire served as a second source of data in my study. I gave participants interviewed by phone and video chat the opportunity to complete the questionnaire themselves and return it to me via text message, email or mail or to allow me to administer the questionnaire. All elected for me to administer the questionnaire. The data obtained on the questionnaire related

to several demographic and work history questions. Specifically, I obtained information on the age, ethnicity, highest education degree earned, undergraduate major and years of teaching experience of each of the participants. This questionnaire provided further context for teachers' accounts of their work. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix E.

A third source of data in this study were the notes I took during each interview and immediately following each interview on the participant's tone, emotional reactions, perceived level of comfort to topics that arose in our conversation and other such observations to assist me with my analysis of the interview. The final source of data in this study were documents pertaining to policies, procedures and responsibilities related to high poverty elementary school teachers' work. These documents allowed me to gain insight into high poverty elementary schools as workplaces and provided me with a means of understanding the institutional context of teachers' responses. The majority of this information was publicly available via school, district and state education websites. In some cases, when such information was not publicly available, I obtained this information directly from the interview participants.

Analysis of Data

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and comprised over 1,000 pages of single-spaced transcript. The transcription process helped me to listen deeply to interviews and enhanced my familiarity with the interview data. I collected and analyzed my data simultaneously, drawing on a constant, comparative method to help me look for systematic patterns, processes, similarities and differences across the data (Charmaz, 2014). Following Charmaz, a variety of conceptual questions helped me identify significant patterns and processes that emerged from the interviews, including:

- What process(es) is at issue here? How can I define it?

- How does this process develop?

- How does the research participant(s) act while involved in this process?

- What does the research participant(s) profess to think and feel while involved in this process? What might his or her observed behavior indicate?

- When, why, and how does the process change?

- What are the consequences of the process? (p. 127)

I read and re-read each transcript several times and made line-by-line notes by hand related to patterns and themes that emerged from the data. These notes allowed me to generate specific codes as related to teachers' identities, work beliefs, relationships, emotional experiences and ways of coping. My initial codes fell into these five categories provided by my theoretical framework. Within each category, specific codes emerged from the responses of the participants themselves. For example, one early coping code was "playing the game," which remained a code throughout my analysis. This hand-written coding process provided my first level of analysis.

I then imported the transcripts into Nvivo, a qualitative software, to assist me with sorting, organizing, merging and refining emergent themes and categories. My goal remained to understand teachers' experiences and ways of coping and look for similarities and differences with respect to teachers' identities, beliefs about work and relationships with others in the workplace. In addition to providing an easy and effective way of sorting and organizing large quantities of text, Nvivo also allowed me to write and organize analytic memos of my thoughts and interpretations throughout the analysis process. These analytic memos related to the interview data, my interview notes, the post-questionnaire and school, district and state documents I collected. Nvivo provided me with an effective organizational tool for managing my data, which allowed me to deepen my analysis.

The Role and Background of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations

The qualitative interviewer is a tool in the research process. As such, it is important the researcher maintain reflexivity on how her personal assumptions, experiences and meanings shape all phases of the research process. Patton (2002) explains:

> Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports. (p. 65)

Researcher reflexivity enhances the rigor of qualitative research (Mason, 2002). My position as a white, female, former high poverty elementary school teacher with a liberal arts education influenced the present study. As is true for any researcher, my positionality influenced what I heard and understood from teachers. My own experience teaching for five years in a high poverty elementary school made me sensitive to the emotional challenges faced by teachers in high poverty elementary schools, but also alerted me to the many different ways teachers may emotionally experience, make sense of and perform their work. However, I recognized my participants' experiences, interpretations and ways of negotiating work likely differed, perhaps entirely, from my own. Maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process helped me avoid letting my own emotional experiences as a teacher unduly shape how I questioned teachers and analyzed my data. Throughout the research process, I strove for descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity despite my positionality.

I had two fears related to my relationship with participants at the outset of this study that proved unfounded. Given the highly sensitive and personal nature of discussing one's emotional experiences, I was concerned my prior work history with some teachers in this study might make

them uncomfortable openly discussing aspects of their emotional work lives with me. I was relieved to find this was not the case. It is even possible our previous relationship benefited our interview by allowing a degree of trust from the outset of the interview that contributed to teachers' frankness about their work lives. At times, our shared experience was apparent, particularly in reference to past events. However, it was also quickly clear in the interviews that much had changed in teachers' work lives since our time working together. This, I believe, was an asset to the study, because all teachers needed to explain to me their current experiences of work, due to my lack of familiarity with those experiences.

At the outset of the study, I also worried that teachers with whom I shared no prior history might be guarded and hesitant to reveal their inner thoughts and feelings to me since I was, by all accounts, a stranger. This, I was also pleased to discover, was not the case. I found all teachers in this study were eager to share their work experiences with an interested listener. They spoke of their thoughts and feelings about their work and themselves with openness and candor that benefited the present work.

Risks and Benefits

This study presented minimal risks to participants. There were no known physical risks to participants. However, the process of in-depth interviewing can bring up uncomfortable feelings, which presented the possibility of psychological risks to participants. Discussing one's inner emotions is inherently personal and the topic is sensitive. I drew on several principles outlined by Charmaz (2014) when interviewing participants on sensitive topics as I designed my interview questions and conducted the interviews with teachers. These principles included:

- Give the participant's comfort level higher priority than obtaining juicy data
- Frame questions to understand the experience from the participant's view

- Affirm that the participant's views and experiences are important

- Be aware of questions that could elicit the participant's distress about an experience or incident

- Construct follow-up questions that encourage elaboration

- Slant ending questions toward positive responses to bring the interview to closure at a positive level.

- Re-evaluate, revise, and add questions throughout the research process. (p. 66)

Additionally, to minimize the psychological risk to participants engaged in this study, I informed them of the purpose and method of the study at the outset of our interview and asked them to sign the consent form presented in Appendix C. Participants received a copy of this form, which included the contact information for the human subjects review board that oversaw this project at my university. I explained that participants were free to withdraw their participation at any time and were not required to answer any question they did not wish to answer. I made it clear at the start of the interview that the teacher could stop the interview at any time without prejudice or penalty, but no teacher changed his/her mind about participation in the study or chose to refrain from answering questions I posed. Since teachers were speaking on sensitive and deeply personal subject matter, I took care to ensure their identity remained confidential, as exposure could cause participants discomfort. To mitigate this risk, all identifying information was kept in a locked cabinet, accessible only to me, for the duration of the study. I use pseudonyms throughout this work and have omitted the names of colleagues, administrators and schools in the data chapters to protect the identity of the participants. I use brackets to indicate these omissions, inserting a general description such as [my principal] or [the school] in place of actual names for the ease of the reader.

This study may offer benefits to the teachers who participated in it. Many teachers expressed gratitude at the end of the interview for having the opportunity to share their experiences and feel truly "listened to" as they expressed the joys, frustrations, concerns and challenges they experience in their work. Many also expressed pleasure in knowing they are helping advance scholars' understanding of high poverty elementary school teachers' work lives.

Methodological Limitations

A limitation of this study, as with any relatively small selection of participants, is that the researcher cannot claim the sample is representative of a larger population. This study does not strive to offer definitive statements or profess generalizability to a larger population. Rather, through in-depth interviewing this study does strive to provide a rich and detailed understanding of the work lives of high poverty elementary school teachers in their complexity, providing insights into patterns related to how these individuals experience and cope with their work. It is possible themes from this study may pertain to more general populations, but generalizability is not an objective of this research study.

A second limitation of the present work relates to my decision to conduct a single interview with participants. After discovering from my pilot study the depth of detail and understanding about teachers' work lives provided by a single interview with teachers, I elected not add to teachers' busy lives by requesting we meet for multiple interview sessions. While the single interview provided me with an in-depth look at teachers' subjective work experiences and interpretations at a particular place and time, it did not reveal how teachers' feelings and understandings change over time.

A third methodological limitation of this study relates to the partial understanding of the high poverty school as a workplace provided by relying solely on the accounts of teachers to

represent it. This means all descriptions of the high poverty workplace and relationships within it in this study reflect teachers' interpretations. Conducting interviews with other individuals in high poverty schools such as school administrators, parents and students and/or conducting observations in the workplace would likely provide a more complete picture of this occupational setting. However, in-depth interviews with teachers allowed me to best understand teachers' beliefs and feelings about their work, which was the primary focus of this investigation. In the chapters that follow, I turn to the teachers and their emotional work lives.

CHAPTER 3

THRIVERS' EMOTIONAL LIVES

In this and the following two chapters, I explore the emotional lives of three distinct

groups of high poverty elementary school teachers that emerged in this study. The theoretical

objective of my exploration is to understand how high poverty elementary school teachers

emotionally experience their work and cope with these emotional experiences. As discussed in

the introduction, each of these chapters will emphasize how teachers' emotional work lives are

shaped by their understandings of themselves, their work beliefs and their work relationships

with others. Through this exploration, I reveal how teachers' emotional experiences and coping

can be differentiated and how these differences affect the individuals engaged in high poverty

teaching and their commitment to their work.

Professional Profile

This chapter explores the emotional experiences and coping strategies of a group of high

poverty elementary school teachers whose work lives were dominated by happiness. I have

labeled this group of teachers *thrivers* for the purpose of this analysis. As we will see, thrivers

occasionally experienced work frustrations and worries, but their emotional work lives were

predominately characterized by feelings of joy and pride. Examining thrivers' beliefs about

themselves, their work, their social relationships and their emotional coping strategies provides

insight into the construction of their highly positive emotional work identity.

Six teachers fell into this *thrivers* theoretical identity group. Table 2 provides an

overview of thrivers' demographics.

Table 2

Thrivers' Demographics

Name	Birth Year	Highest Ed. Degree	Undergraduate Major	Years Teaching Elem.	Position
Kathy	1963	Master's	early childhood	30	2nd grade
Nicole	1978	Master's	music	15	3rd grade
Hannah	1986	Master's	early childhood	1	kindergarten
Carrie	1988	Specialist	early childhood	5	1st grade
Dawn	1982	EdD	early childhood	9	5th grade
Louisa	1972	Specialist	elementary education	20	4th grade

All thrivers were female classroom teachers and together represented six elementary school grade levels (K-5). All but one of the thrivers had five or more years of elementary school teaching experience at the time of our interview, and half of the thrivers had 15 or more years of experience teaching elementary school, placing them in the top quartile of teaching experience of all teachers in this study. All but one of the thrivers majored in early childhood or elementary education as an undergraduate. Also, all of these teachers had advanced degrees in education: at the time of the interview, three thrivers had Master's degrees, two had Specialist degrees and one teacher had a doctorate degree.

In this chapter, I explore the emotional experiences and emotional coping strategies of thrivers, focusing in particular on how these experiences and coping strategies relate to thrivers' beliefs about themselves, their work and their relationships with others.

Emotional Experiences

Happiness

Working with students. When I asked thrivers how they felt about teaching in their current school, five out of six thrivers replied they "loved it." Nearly all thrivers experienced the

greatest joy in their work from their interactions with students. "Working with the students and seeing them light up when they actually understand something or get something right [is my greatest joy]. I thrive on their enjoyment," explained Dawn, a fifth grade teacher. Seeing students' joy in the classroom was central to thrivers' experiences of joy in their work. All enjoyed the *process* of teaching students and developing relationships with students. Their enjoyment of student relationships, in particular, was consistent with previous research (Hargreaves, 2000; Lortie, 1975; McLaughlin, 1993; Nias, 1989). A third grade teacher, Nicole, explained: "I like when I work with the small groups and can just get to know them and have fun with them and get them to actually like learning." Working closely with students allowed thrivers to deepen their understanding of the students as individuals and inspire students' enthusiasm for learning. Connecting with students in this way brought thrivers joy.

Moments of student success, as mentioned by Dawn above, were particularly joyous. All thrivers loved the moment when a concept clicked for students and their confusion gave way to clarity and understanding. Louisa, a fourth grade teacher, described such a moment that occurred with a struggling student in her class on the day of our interview:

> I was sitting with him one-on-one working on adding fractions. We were going over and over and over it. After the first try, he would get it right, and then he would have a misstep because he couldn't remember the steps. Finally, he would get an improper fraction, and he *got* it, he was able to do that mixed number at the end of his addition sentence. It's those moments that you're like, *"Yes!"* (mimes fist pump in the air and fist bumping student)

Students' success in such moments validated a fundamental pedagogical belief of thrivers, namely, that hard work and perseverance were central components of the learning process and

contributed to students' success. The belief that skills such as intelligence can be cultivated through effort is central to what social psychologist Carol Dweck (2006) has labeled a *growth mindset,* also known as an *incremental theory of intelligence.* Growth mindset is distinguished from a *fixed mindset,* in which individuals view skills such as intelligence as relatively stable traits (Dweck, 2006). Seeing students persevere in the face of a learning challenge brought thrivers joy, in part, because they believed embracing such hard work would continue to serve students well in future learning endeavors. This belief is consistent with over three decades of research by Dweck and her colleagues. That Louisa's student experienced success after a period of hard work and perseverance—and now *knew* he could do it—meant she and the student accomplished something important. Seeing growth in students' confidence in their own abilities brought thrivers great joy. They loved when their belief in a student's ability to succeed was embraced by the student himself. It was important to all thrivers that their students understand they believed in their potential and were there to support them in achieving their goals. As Louisa explained, "My room should be the one place you know no one is going to give up on you."

All thrivers also described celebratory moments with students as a great source of joy. This happiness spoke to the nature of the relationship between thriver and student. When the fourth grader's perseverance paid off in successfully completing the math problem, the success was a shared triumph with his teacher, and they celebrated by fist pumping the air and then fist bumping each other. An important feature of thrivers' relationship with students was making sure students understood they cared about and supported them as individuals. For one thriver, getting to know her students outside of the classroom and supporting their extracurricular interests brought her happiness. "I enjoy [going] to sporting events, pig shows, watching them

play sports, and then just see[ing] them out in the community," she explained. All thrivers felt a holistic understanding of their students as individuals strengthened the bond they shared in the classroom.

Working with administrators. All thrivers attributed their happiness at work in large part to their strong positive relationships with their administrators.

> It's a wonderful school. We've got very supportive administration that's supportive of us and the kids. My team that I work with is amazing. (Nicole)

> I work well with all my teachers, my team, staff, the administration. It's a very friendly, open school. (Dawn)

> I love it… it's very much a family atmosphere. The other staff members are very supportive of each other, so there's a lot of camaraderie. (Hannah)

As one can see from the above excerpts, thrivers valued the friendliness and camaraderie of their work relationships. Thrivers' relationships with their administrators shared four core characteristics: *trust, respect, support* and *appreciation.* The support of administrators, a long time focus in teacher stress and burnout literature, is negatively associated with stress-related illness and burnout among teachers (Smylie, 1999). As we will see in this chapter, thrivers' emotional experiences of work seemed to support these findings.

Thrivers' trust in their administrators stemmed in large part from the belief their administrators made school policy decisions with the best interests of students in mind. This belief also contributed to a general respect for them. Nicole explained:

> One thing I love about my school [is that] administration is very visible to the students and know the students by name and engage the students constantly. You know that they value them because of *them*, not because of their test scores and their

growth. When we discuss students, it's more about discussing the student and their

needs [rather] than just the student was a 1.1 and went to a 1.2 and, "What data points

did you collect?" and things like that.

It was important to thrivers that administrators cared about their students as individuals, not just

data points. They respected and appreciated that their administrators made an effort to learn

about and establish relationships with students. This orientation aligned with thrivers'

pedagogical beliefs and goals for themselves regarding their own interactions with students.

The trust administrators extended to thrivers granted them a degree of autonomy in their

classrooms that allowed them to use their own judgement to do what they believed was best for

their students. Sometimes teachers' beliefs differed from a particular school policy, but this

difference seemed to result in little tension between the teacher and administrator. For example,

Nicole's principal set an expectation that teachers would utilize a math workshop model where

students rotated in small groups to various math stations, at which they engage in a particular

math activity for a designated period of time, every day during math period. She received two

formal evaluations from her principal during math time and during neither of these evaluative

visits was the class engaged in traditional math workshop.

> [During the first formal observation] we were doing read aloud, and then they were
>
> doing a response to the read aloud. It was math focused, it wasn't workshop-y at all,
>
> but he gave me really high marks. He said he loved what I was doing. Then he came
>
> last week. Usually I try to do workshop two days a week, and Wednesday I told him
>
> we were doing project based learning. So he came in on Wednesday and we were
>
> doing fractions and sets in small groups. [Again], it wasn't workshop-y at all, but he
>
> loved it and gave me high marks. So he sets out the expectations… but as long as he

sees that we're doing something that's beneficial, he's not going to freak out because

the calendar was on the right wall instead of the left wall or something.

This passage reveals thrivers' approval of their administrators valuing quality learning in the classroom over adherence to school policy for adherence's sake. While not following the math workshop expectation set by her principal, Nicole's effective lessons impressed him and he celebrated her excellence by rewarding her with praise and high evaluation marks rather than penalizing or chastising her for not adhering to his original pedagogical vision. Moments like this built thrivers' trust that their administrators shared their goal of pursuing what was best for students. It also made them feel that their administrators respected, appreciated and supported their expertise and ability to achieve this goal.

Thrivers' experience of classroom autonomy was not absolute, but generally thrivers felt their principal was willing to work with them and support deviations from the curriculum or standard school policies when possible and within reason. "With my administration… I have never encountered a 'no' that didn't have a good reason behind it," explained Hannah. Thrivers felt another sign of their administrators' respect for them was their open communication regarding the majority of school policies and procedures. In the experience of nearly all thrivers, their administrators did not demand school policy changes without explaining *why* such changes were being instituted.

Thrivers also trusted their administrators were interested in promoting teacher growth. Perhaps for this reason, thrivers felt comfortable getting constructive feedback from their administrators; they believe the feedback was provided in good faith to improve their practice. Hannah, the first year teacher, described receiving feedback from her principal:

She and I have had conversations [about areas for growth], but then again, she doesn't act

like, "I got you!" or "Caught you doing something wrong!" It's a learning experience.

We're given the same grace that we're expected to give the kids; that life is a learning

process.

As expressed by Hannah, thrivers did not feel pressure from their principals to be perfect in their

work. Their administrators' support encouraged thrivers to seize opportunities to learn from the

expertise of others in their workplace.

Working with colleagues. Thrivers also attributed their happiness at work in large part

to their strong positive relationships with their colleagues. This finding is consistent with

previous research suggesting relationships with colleagues are an important source of enjoyment

for teachers in their work (Bullough, 2009; Nias, 1989). Like the relationships with

administrators, thrivers' relationships with their colleagues also shared the four core

characteristics of *trust, respect, support* and *appreciation.* Thrivers had the most contact

throughout their workday with their grade level and support colleagues. For nearly all thrivers,

they felt closest with these teachers in their school. Nicole, who was responsible for teaching

many of the lowest academic achieving students on her grade level, explained the support she

received from her early intervention program (EIP) teacher.

When I'm working with a small group, the EIP teacher will be the one walking around

helping the students one-on-one who she sees struggling… she can nip [mis]behaviors in

the bud immediately. She is so accomplished that she's great at, "You do this," "You do

this," "You do this," "Let me help you here," "You're over here." I can concentrate on

the group that I have in front of me and I don't have to be constantly putting out fires

with the rest of my class… It would be really hard to manage that large of a classroom

with all the different issues on my own without [her] support.

Nicole's respect for the EIP teacher's behavior management and teaching skills and her trust in

the EIP teacher's ability to effectively assist and redirect individual students in the class allowed

her to focus on meeting the needs of the students in the small group right in front of her and not

have to divert her attention away from the group as often as she might if she were the only

teacher in the room. She did not encounter the frustration of trying to manage a large group of

students engaged in different tasks around the classroom while also teaching the small group

before her, and in this way, the support of the EIP teacher prevented Nicole from potentially

feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. Her support also allowed Nicole to engage in the aspect of

her work that brought her the greatest joy and was the most personally fulfilling, teaching

students, rather than be sidetracked by potential student behavior disruptions. This passage also

reveals something of the support teacher's respect for and trust in Nicole. She assisted in the

classroom where she saw assistance needed, but she did not attempt to criticize, change or

micromanage Nicole's work. The teachers' mutual appreciation of, trust in and respect for one

another resulted in an enjoyable work experience for Nicole.

Evidence of colleagues' shared trust, respect and support was also visible in their

enjoyment of collaborating together. Nicole continued:

My team that I work with is amazing. If you wanted a perfect study of collaboration, that

would be my team this year. It's great. Everybody is willing to share… This is my first

year in 3rd grade and this is one of the other teachers' 15th year in 3rd grade, so there's a

lot of knowledge going around, but nobody is stuck in their ways. Everybody is willing to

try any ideas that are brought up. My team does a great job. [When] I'm like, "Hey, this

could be a really cool idea!" then other people on my team are better at actually taking

the idea and turning it into a reality by making the anchor charts or the project materials.

We just really get along together. It's exactly what you think collaboration should be.

One can see from this passage the importance of authentic collaboration to thrivers and how much they valued having their strengths embraced by colleagues. Such collaborative relationships were consistent with thrivers' beliefs about how professional relationships within the school should be. All thrivers believed collaborating with grade level colleagues strengthened their team as a whole and also strengthened the educational experiences they were able to provide to their students.

Working with parents. Interestingly, only one thriver, Kathy, specifically mentioned the joy of receiving respect and support from her students' parents. For Kathy, helping a student by convincing a parent to act in a way she believed in the best interest of the student was one of the most joyous experiences in her work. She felt a sense of validation in successfully advocating for a student with the student's parent, because she felt convincing the parent meant gaining the parent's respect for her expertise and also the parent's trust that she wanted what was best for his/her child. Importantly, she also believed it produced a positive outcome for the student about which she felt good. Kathy bridged the school-home boundary by giving her cell phone to parents at the beginning of each school year and encouraging them to call her directly with questions or concerns. For parents with heavily structured work schedules during the day, the only time they were available to chat was in the evening, and she found answering their questions and assuaging their concerns at such times in the best interests of her students. She never experienced this privilege abused by parents, and firmly believed it helped address a

number of behavioral and academic concerns of students in her class before they grew into larger problems.

For other thrivers, developing strong relationships with parents, particularly in terms of communication, was important because they found it beneficial to students, but the interactions with parents themselves were not described as a source of joy. According to all thrivers, parent relationships, like those described above with colleagues and administrators, were best when grounded in trust, respect and support.

Pride

There is overlap between thrivers' experiences of happiness and pride in their work, but thrivers' descriptions of proud moments spoke more directly to their views of themselves. Thrivers' moments of greatest pride shared three dominant characteristics: *success with students*, including successfully protecting students from adverse situations, *earning appreciation and respect from others* and *having a strong work ethic*. These characteristics were, in many cases, interrelated, and support Frenzel's (2014) finding that teachers experience pride when they feel they've done their job well.

Successes with students made thrivers proud partially because they validated thrivers' understandings of themselves as caring, competent and successful teachers. The centrality of *caring* about their students to thrivers' work identity was consistent with previous research on teachers' professional identities (Bullough, 2009; Nias, 1999; O'Connor, 2006). An echo of a great joy for thrivers was feeling proud by the growth students demonstrated over the course of the school year.

> They come to us much lower at our school, but watching them grow and watching them
>
> *get it*, even [if] they're not going to be ready for second [grade]. That you're going to
>
> make so much progress—that's extremely rewarding. (Carrie)

Such student growth was concrete evidence of "making a difference" for students, described by all thrivers as among the most rewarding experiences in their work. Thrivers were proud to know they positively influenced students' understandings of themselves as learners in addition to achieving particular academic goals with those students. They found it gratifying to see students develop confidence and learning skills that they could use in the future beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

Thrivers prided themselves on being advocates for and protectors of their students. They often could not know the full extent of students' trials and tribulations outside of school, but they considered protecting their students in ways that were within their power one of their most important professional responsibilities.

Others' appreciation for thrivers' expertise in their work was also a source of pride. For Nicole, being chosen as Teacher of the Year by her school colleagues was her proudest work moment, because it felt like she had "proved herself" to her colleagues. For Carrie, being asked to lead professional development and extra student learning sessions was a great source of pride:

> I love being someone in our school that people can come to with questions and coaches
>
> can say, "We've got professional development coming up. Can you lead it?" We're going
>
> to do Saturday Academy, and I was asked to come do it. I like being that reliable person.
>
> It makes me feel that I'm doing what I need to be doing and that I can help others.

For thrivers, such moments result in pride because they demonstrated trust in and respect for their effectiveness as teachers. All thrivers felt good knowing colleagues and administrators in their school felt comfortable turning to them for guidance and support.

Thrivers also prided themselves on their strong work ethic; they found meeting the manifold demands of the work personally rewarding. It was important to thrivers to continue developing their professional knowledge and skills by pursuing higher degrees, which may explain the high number of advanced education degrees among this group of teachers. Several thrivers expressed pride at earning an advanced degree while teaching full time.

Frustrations

Thrivers' experiences of work were not entirely positive; they also, at times, experienced work frustrations. These frustrations primarily occurred when their pedagogical beliefs were threatened. Thrivers' pedagogical beliefs primarily aligned with a *social constructivist theory of learning* (Vygotsky, 1978). They believed their students learned best by actively building their own understanding of the world around them. They also believed learning curricular concepts through discovery and hands-on engagement enhanced students' understanding and best fostered their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Sometimes thrivers' pedagogical beliefs clashed with certain school policies and expectations. All thrivers, with the exception of the kindergarten teacher, who was not involved in standardized testing, were frustrated at times by the centrality of standardized tests to the curricular content, pacing and academic assessment of their students. For several thrivers, expectations to cover broad curricular content infused a time pressure into their instruction that resulted in students engaging with academic material in more superficial ways than they believed best for them. Louisa explained:

> The rush to have to get it all in in one year and not having the ability to go deep [can be frustrating]. I like to do things that make the kids think. I like to do things that cause them to work together and to solve a problem. There's just not enough time for that. I don't want them regurgitating facts. I want them to use the facts and *apply* them in some way, and there's no time for that. That's frustrating to me.

This passage reveals the frustration nearly all thrivers felt when students were required to learn in ways that did not engage and develop what they considered crucial learning skills. Thrivers also expressed frustration when time pressure led to administrative pressure to "tell" students information rather than allowing them to learn through discovery. At times during the school year, thrivers felt pressured to ignore *teachable moments* (moments in which a student raised a question or made a connection that presented an excellent learning opportunity for the class, but did not directly relate to the teacher's plan for the period). Nearly all thrivers expressed the belief that drawing on such learning opportunities and student interests to communicate curricular material were more lasting, effective ways of teaching their students than rotely telling them information.

Thrivers also occasionally experienced frustration when expected to complete an overwhelming number of tasks in their work.

> There are moments when [the job] is very overwhelming. You feel overwhelmed with paperwork, and things to do, things that are for the grown-ups involved, not the kids, but that's not an overarching feeling. That's in the moment when those things are coming due. Those [times] can be frustrating. (Hannah)

When thrivers spoke of feeling overwhelmed in their work, most often they discussed the large amounts of paperwork for which they were responsible. Documenting student achievement to try

to help them qualify for additional support services could be particularly overwhelming. Nicole explained:

> I have eight students who are currently in SST on tier 3, and that paperwork and remembering which students I have to assess biweekly, which students I have to assess weekly, which students are tested on this skill, which students I'm supposed to mediate with twice a week and which ones I'm supposed to mediate with once a week. Then keeping all the data, I've got posted notes of papers and things all over the place.

There was little human support for the administrative side of their work, and thrivers sometimes found themselves frustrated as they attempted to juggle these administrative tasks with their regular classroom teaching responsibilities. For several thrivers, part of feeling frustrated by paperwork stemmed from not understanding the necessity for particular administrative tasks, for example, being required to write long, detailed daily lesson plans for administrators that were not used by the teachers themselves. This lapse in administrator communication, while not common in thrivers' experience, might speak to the importance of strong administrator-teacher communication to thrivers. Open communication, as discussed above, contributed to thrivers' positive view of administrators and their enjoyment of work. When non-teaching tasks involved large amounts of paperwork that thrivers found overly bureaucratic, they felt such work was a waste of their time that could be better spent on planning for or directly interacting with their students. Notably, work frustrations were not long lasting experiences for thrivers. I describe how thrivers mitigated their work frustrations in the coping section later in this chapter.

Worries

All thrivers experienced worry at times in their work regarding their students' health and safety. Dawn explained, "It's never off your mind. You're always thinking about the kids,

especially when it's cold, you're thinking, 'Are they warm? Do they have food?'" Thrivers'
sense of responsibility to their students did not end after school hours, and this led to concerns
about the health and safety of their students during the time they were away from school.

Two thrivers also expressed worries related to future policy changes regarding testing and
accountability. Nicole, new to her school this year, explained her fear regarding her school's
future orientation toward testing.

> I'm worried that the testing mania will take over. That's the one thing that I noticed that's
> the big difference [from my former district]. There's a lot less emphasis on standardized
> tests. We go over data, but it's used more as a way of growth than [as] a punishment. It's
> presented more, "Here's where you can do better." But I'm kind of nervous that the
> county is going to come out with more testing mandates to align with what other counties
> surrounding [us] are doing and change to where my school spends a significant more
> amount of time on testing… That would be my biggest worry, the depersonalization of
> standardized testing, where your kids are just numbers.

Increased "testing mania" would pose a threat to the alignment of Nicole's pedagogical beliefs
with her schools' beliefs about testing. All thrivers enjoyed working in a school where their
students were viewed as unique individuals and not "just numbers." In this case, Nicole
appreciated her school's approach to the tests differed from the approach in surrounding districts,
but feared an increase in testing pressure and focus might threaten her ability to teach her
students in a manner that celebrated their growth and individuality.

Two additional worries expressed by several thrivers related to frustrations discussed in
the previous section: the impact of tests on the curriculum and the time devoted to test prep
throughout the year on students' acquisition of foundational learning skills.

I think we're losing the love for reading, because we're having to push [content] down their throats... We were talking about, as teachers, maybe we're taking the wrong approach. But right now that's the way we're going. It's just short passages, answer questions. We haven't figured out that balance of how to put the novels back into the everyday classroom when we only have 55 minutes [for literacy]. (Dawn)

Dawn expressed the fear that her students were not being exposed to reading in such a way that allowed them to experience the pleasure and joy of it. She believed her students embraced the joy of reading through novels rather than short test prep passages with questions attached, but in the months leading up to the standardized tests in the school year, she worried she was doing more test training with students than helping them build a positive relationship with literacy. Interestingly, one can see in this passage how Dawn believed she was responsible for making positive changes in her students' learning, as she discussed working on how to balance work she found important with test prep expectations. All thrivers expressed this sense of responsibility to students to help them engage in meaningful learning. Dawn's goal as a teacher was to find a way to include pieces of literature, such as novels, in the daily curriculum so that her students were still exposed to literature that she believed was enjoyed by and beneficial to them. Several thrivers expressed concern related to the cost to students of having to truncate or get rid of former units and projects they found meaningful and students enjoyed. It troubled them that the pressure to score well on end of year standardized tests affected the curricular content and methods their administrators sometimes expected them to use to teach their students.

Two thrivers also expressed worries about linking test scores to teacher pay. In Kathy's district, the move to a pay-for-performance model entailed moving away from financially rewarding teachers for higher degrees earned and focusing instead on annual teacher

performance. Believing her practice benefited tremendously from her own advanced degree, Kathy worried this decision would deter teachers from pursuing higher degrees in a way that ultimately hurt students.

A final concern raised by several thrivers related to a frustration discussed in the previous section: they sometimes worried about getting it all done. Notably, administrators' evaluations were not a source of anxiety for any of the thrivers in this group, nor was a more general fear of failing to successfully teach their students. It is possible the positive relationship with and trust in their administrators explained this lack of anxiety about formal evaluations. It is also possible a general confidence in their own teaching ability contributed to their lack of worry about such evaluations.

Regrets

Thrivers expressed few regrets about working in their current school, and all thrivers with the exception of Kathy, who planned to retire after teaching for 30 years at the end of the school year, planned to continue teaching in their current school for the foreseeable future. Research indicates many high poverty teachers leave their schools each school year (Ingersoll et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2012), so thrivers' desire to remain in their schools is notable and interesting. The positive nature of thrivers' relationships with administrators and colleagues in their workplace, specifically the support, trust and respect they experienced, in addition to their ability to successfully accomplish what they wanted to accomplish in their work, may have been important factors in their decision to remain in their current schools.

When asked about their feelings regarding their career choice, thrivers also expressed few regrets. Nearly all thrivers said they would choose teaching again if they could go back in time. As Hannah explained, "I can't imagine anything else that I would enjoy this much. For all the

things I like, there's nothing that is as lasting in its enjoyment." For these thrivers, the dominant experience of joy in their work made them happy they chose to be teachers.

One thriver, Louisa, did not fit this pattern, saying she was not sure she would choose to be a teacher if she could make the choice again. While she reiterated happiness dominated her emotional experiences of work, value differences between her educational beliefs and the beliefs of leaders in her district, particularly in terms of how they judged excellence in teaching, troubled her. Considering the concern raised by two other thrivers regarding new pay-for-performance models in their districts, the topics of teacher evaluation and pay in relation to teacher emotions and retention seems worthy of further exploration.

Thrivers' identification as extremely happy in their work raised an important question: how do thrivers cope with their negative work emotions such that their work lives are primarily dominated by happiness? I examine this question in the following section.

Coping

Hochschild (1983) asserts individuals draw on two different types of acting, *surface* and *deep acting*, to induce or suppress particular emotions at work for their own benefit. Interestingly, thrivers typically did not rely on surface acting when dealing with their negative work emotions. It is possible their lack of surface acting as an emotional resource could be attributed to their predominant happiness in the workplace. Conversely, it is also possible that their predominant happiness in the workplace could be attributed to their lack of surface acting. The close alignment of their pedagogical beliefs with their work environment and the positive work relationships with which they identified may have obviated the need to pretend to feel positive emotions in much of their work. It is also possible the dissonance thrivers might have experienced in relying on surface acting, for example, in a negative interaction with a colleague

or administrator, might have damaged the underlying relationship the thriver had with that

individual. A trusting, positive relationship may have drawn these teachers to use deep acting

strategies to cope with a negative emotion.

Thrivers did rely on deep acting strategies, or altering their underlying feeling to align

with their school's expectations, to cope with their negative work emotions. Five dominant

coping strategies characterized how thrivers typically negotiated emotions in their work lives:

reach out to one's social support network, accentuate the positive, empathize with others, be true

to one's beliefs and *create breaks from work*. The second and third of these strategies drew on

deep acting (Hochschild, 1983).

Reach Out to Social Support Network

A dominant emotional coping strategy of thrivers was reaching out to individuals in their

social support network to cope with negative work emotions. All thrivers found it beneficial to

share frustrations and worries with those who could relate. As noted previously in this chapter in

the section on thrivers' happiness, trusted colleagues were a primary emotional resource for

thrivers in their work. Hannah described reaching out to her co-workers when work frustrations

arose: "We vent to each other in the safe environment of one of our classrooms after school. We

help each other work through it, make the to-do list." In this case, Hannah not only relied on her

colleagues for emotional release, but then took action to change her work circumstance to make

it less emotionally overwhelming. Collaborating with colleagues could make initially

overwhelming moments feel surmountable for thrivers.

Some thrivers also described reaching out to family members or friends with experience

in education. Louisa explained, "When I get around my teaching friends, it's like (makes gushing

sound). You just spit it all out. (Laughter.) And it helps." Thrivers come away from opportunities

to release their negative work emotions feeling less stressed. However, sharing with individuals who had experience in teaching was a key distinction made by thrivers. They found friends and loved ones who had never worked as educators tended not to understand their emotional experiences of work as well as those with teaching experience. Nearly all thrivers expressed the challenge of trying to share one's work feelings with a non-educator loved one, and most preferred to talk about work with trusted colleagues or family members who had a background in teaching. But in particularly tough times, thrivers found themselves reaching out to trusted loved ones despite their lack of understanding of the work. Louisa explained:

> It helps that my husband's not really big on talking about school, so I have to find other outlets for it. At first, I hated that… but that's helped me in a way. It's helped me realize, "Is what I'm about to say important?" Sometimes it's not. Sometimes it helps me let it roll off my back, but there are times that he has to sit there and listen. (Laughter.) But he knows when it gets to that point, it's been a rough day.

The lack of interest of Louisa's husband in discussing her work helped her put small irritations or frustrations from work in perspective and recognize they were not always worth expressing. When she had an extremely tough day, she knew she could share her experiences with him, and in those times, she found the emotional release of sharing with her husband helpful. All thrivers felt having an opportunity to share their negative work emotions with others and feel *heard* helped them recover from those experiences without feeling the need to further ruminate on them.

Accentuate the Positive

A second dominant coping strategy of thrivers was accentuating positive emotional experiences in their work. One way thrivers accomplished this was by focusing on feelings of

gratitude for their positive work relationships with colleagues and administrators. All thrivers expressed feeling lucky to be in a position where they were supported and trusted by colleagues and administrators, appreciating these positive relationships were not a certainty in the workplace. Nicole and Louisa, who had negative experiences with principals in the recent past, were particularly appreciative of their new, positive relationships with their administrators. Nicole explained, "To me, this is totally different. This is great. I've so much freedom." For these thrivers, the autonomy they felt in their new school environment allowed them to interact with their students in ways that they believed better served them, and for this ability to teach in a way consistent with their pedagogical beliefs, they also felt grateful.

Additionally, thrivers reflected gratefully on the lively and absorbing nature of their work. Its lack of predictability demanded their quick thinking and creativity, and the multiple roles and responsibilities they juggled on a daily basis meant the work was rarely boring. Their enjoyment of the unpredictability of their work is consistent with previous research on primary school teachers' emotional experiences of work (Nias, 1989). Keeping this gratitude in mind on busy days sometimes lessened thrivers experiences of frustration. Instead of ruminating on potential drawbacks of having many tasks to accomplish, they focused instead on being excited by the challenges presented to them. While these teachers occasionally did feel overwhelmed in their work, it is possible such experiences occurred less frequently and were less acute in part because thrivers focused on the excitement of feeling challenged.

Accentuating the positive was a coping strategy thrivers often embraced when dealing with the frustration of standardized tests, which all thrivers, with the exception of the kindergarten teacher, distributed quarterly for the school district and annually for the state. Nearly all thrivers described minimizing the importance of standardized tests with their students,

encouraging students to view them as an opportunity for feedback on their learning and

something they could use as a motivator rather than a universal judgement on their ability as

learners. Encouraging this mindset benefited the thrivers as well as their students.

> Sometimes when you get test scores back, you think, "Oh, they were going to do so
>
> well," and then they don't so well. But then you've got to be like the kids, you can't
>
> let that hold you down, you've got to move forward, because you've got to put on the
>
> show the next day. You have to be the positive one. (Dawn)

Part of accentuating the positive entailed thinking of one's emotional impact on others.

Thrivers were not immune to experiencing disappointments in their work, as Dawn described,

but their understanding of themselves as the leader of the classroom meant they were a role

model for their students. Thinking about how to present disappointing news to students in a way

that could be beneficial encouraged them to find the positive in such situations and left them

little time to ruminate on negative feelings.

Thrivers also drew on humor in their interactions with students and colleagues to

accentuate the positive in their work and alleviate stress. Remembering funny occurrences in the

classroom and sharing laughs with students brought them pleasure and helped them keep work

frustrations in perspective. This was consistent with the research findings of Hargreaves (1998)

and Nias (1989) who found humor contributed to the joy of classroom life for teachers.

> Sometimes you just listen to [the students] say something funny and it makes everything
>
> better, because then you think, "Well, they're just kids." Then you forget about the
>
> testing and you just let them be kids. They say some of the funniest things or give you
>
> some of the funniest looks. Sometimes you just take what they have and it makes you

laugh… I had [a student] who used to eat tinfoil. Just thinking about those funny

moments and remembering they are kids. (Dawn)

Drawing on humorous moments helped thrivers retain a sense of perspective in their work.

Thrivers found, at times, sharing a joke dissipated frustration with a student or group of students,

and they believed it also strengthened their relationships with students.

In order to accentuate the positive in their work, thrivers sometimes found it helpful to

shield themselves or remove themselves completely from a negative work environment. For

Nicole and Louisa, this entailed leaving a school where they felt burdened by negative

relationships with their administrators and moving to a school with positive teacher-

administrator relations. For all thrivers, accentuating the positive in their work meant distancing

themselves, whenever possible, from negativity within their school.

I'm on alert pretty much all the time for those toxic relationships. I try to keep them at

bay, because you have those people no matter where you go. It could be an administrator.

It could be a coworker. I try to gauge that with how they are with my kids. I don't call my

kids out for every little thing, because they're kids, but there are people who will walk in

your room and will call your kids out on anything. I just want to tell them, "You need to

leave. We've got it going on in here. You need to leave." You get on alert for those types

of relationships. Once you cleanse yourself of those, you just don't want them to creep

back in. (Louisa)

This passage demonstrates, as discussed previously, the importance to thrivers of protecting their

students. As leader of the classroom, they saw it as their responsibility to establish a positive

learning environment for their students. Distance from negativity benefited the teacher and the

students, from the perspective of thrivers.

Two thrivers, Carrie and Hannah, believed their strong faith helped them accentuate the positive in their work. "I always do a morning devotion, a little prayer time just to get my mind right and ready for the day," explained Carrie. She found this morning devotion helped her begin each day on a positive note and train her mind to find the good in her work rather than focusing on disappointments or frustrations. Faith also helped prevent stress for these two thrivers. "I have found that God is gracious and provides," explained Hannah. "Even when I'm stressing about something, telling him and letting it go—that's the best thing I can do." Faith allowed her to let go of worries and frustrations by believing a higher power was looking out for her best intentions and the best intentions of her students and colleagues. Sharing these emotional experiences with a higher power allowed her to move beyond them with the comforting knowledge that she had done her best to ensure the safety, success and happiness of her students, colleagues and herself.

Empathize with Others

A third dominant coping strategy of thrivers was empathizing with others. Thrivers found empathy helped them gain patience with administrators, students and parents by relating to their position rather than immediately becoming frustrated by it. Carrie explained:

> Those kids who are getting under your skin, you just think, "Maybe it's something at
>
> home that's making them act out like this. I don't know the whole situation." You try to
>
> give them the benefit of the doubt for their actions. You've got to build a story.

"Building a story" that was consistent with one's positive understanding of the student prevented frustration that thrivers might otherwise have experienced when student misbehavior occurred. Carrie found she was less likely to take misbehavior from a student personally when she searched what she knew of the student's life to help her explain the student's current misbehavior. This strategy was not about pitying students or ignoring all student behavior

problems, but rather putting oneself in the student's shoes to discover what might be going on in that moment rather than immediately taking offense and getting angry or frustrated. In some cases, this strategy resulted in cutting upset or misbehaving students some slack.

Empathy was also a strategy thrivers employ when interacting with parents. Hannah described being questioned by a parent who was disappointed in her child's progress report during a parent-teacher conference.

> Her daughter had a "progressing" on the progress report four weeks into the school year. She's like, "What was she struggling on?!" It was like, "Well, she wasn't really struggling. 'Progressing' is not a mark of struggling, especially not at five." There's a disconnect between the language we use and the language that parents understand, that *we* would understand if we were in their shoes about how we score things. It's not an A, B, C scale, so most of the [parent] questions have to do with that.

By looking at the progress report from the perspective of the parent, Hannah was able to understand how the language used might not accurately convey students' academic progress in her classroom to an outsider. Empathy helped her engage in a discussion with the frustrated parent rather than feel upset her expertise or judgement was questioned.

Thrivers also engaged in empathy to cope with frustrations involving administrators. Louisa explained initially feeling frustrated by a new school policy that required all parent-teacher conferences occur in a particular two-day window.

> Mathematically, I can't do 29 conferences in 2 days. I have 13 slots on Wednesday and 13 slots on Thursday. That leaves me three more kids that I have to do, and you haven't given me any time to pee. I'm [thinking], "This is just so ineffective." [Then] "I know

that it's ineffective, but our principal's only been there for 34 days, because she was hired

and put in our school on the Friday before Christmas break," so I try to control myself.

Empathy dissipated Louisa's frustration at the situation and increased her patience with the new

principal's policy. We can see the centrality of the principal's feelings in Louisa's decision to

hold herself back from voicing her frustration to prevent potentially overwhelming the new

principal with negative feedback.

Be True to One's Beliefs

A fourth coping strategy sometimes utilized by thrivers when they disagreed with a work

policy or decision was to be true to their beliefs. This strategy sometimes prevented thrivers from

becoming irritated with work policies or situations, because instead of implementing a policy

that they did not believe in, they chose to act in a way consistent with what they believed to be

best for their students.

> If I can get away with doing what makes sense and not have to involve someone else, I
>
> just go ahead and do it. It just makes life easier if I go ahead and do it. If someone else
>
> sees me doing it and it makes sense to them, I don't have problems sharing it. If an
>
> administrator notices it and doesn't say anything about it, good for me, I did something
>
> that made sense and no one's reprimanding me for it. But if it makes sense, I'm not going
>
> to worry about the reprimand. (Louisa)

Nearly all teachers described doing what made sense for their students, even if it did not

perfectly align with school policy, with the firm conviction that they could justify their choices to

an administrator if and when necessary. From their perspective, it was sometimes easiest to be

your own boss and act in a way that was consistent with what you felt was best for your students.

Anything I do in my room, I feel like I can support. If you want to call me to the carpet on it, go ahead, but I can show you why I did it. That's how I feel about it, so I don't worry about the repercussions. (Louisa)

I have to ignore a lot of stuff to keep my sanity. Sometimes [an administrator] will say, "You have to do this," and I'm like, "No that's not going to happen. I'm not going to do calendar every day, I'm sorry." Instead of getting stressed out, "How am I going to fit in calendar?!" I'm just, "No, not going to do it. It's not the best for the kids." (Nicole)

These excerpts reveal thrivers' relative comfort breaking school rules or policies they did not think were best for students. By doing so, thrivers felt they were fulfilling one of their main obligations to students, which was to protect their interests. Defying school rules revealed a certain confidence in oneself and one's standing within the school. Interestingly, this strategy did not appear to hurt thrivers' relationships with their administrators, who seemingly did not take offense at their defiance. It is possible thrivers' positive relationships with administrators and strong collegial support network made such defiance possible without fear of repercussions. It is also possible their reasoning, when explained to administrators, made sense and was respected by them. A third possibility is that administrators were frequently unaware that certain of their policies had been defied.

Finding ways to conduct their work that were consistent with their beliefs might partially explain thrivers' lack of persistent, long-lasting negative emotional work experiences. Thrivers typically did not alter their core beliefs about teaching and learning to fit a particular school context. If uncomfortable or unable to teach the way they wanted in a given moment, as in Dawn's experience teaching reading described earlier in the chapter, thrivers believed it was their responsibility to come up with an acceptable solution to this problem. None of these

teachers gave up their pedagogical beliefs in favor of permanent acceptance of what they considered a lesser way of teaching. This action-oriented mentality toward solving problems at work may partially explain why thrivers expressed few experiences of hopelessness in their work. They believed in their ability to find a way to teach that would serve their students well. It is also possible thrivers' focus on what they believed was best for their students allowed them to avoid experiencing negative emotions such as guilt or frustration for failing to accomplish all of the expectations of their school administrators.

Create Breaks from Work

The fifth dominant emotional coping strategy of thrivers was to create breaks from work to allow themselves time to emotionally recharge. Thrivers believed such breaks allowed them to best serve their students, colleagues, administrators and parents. All thrivers created space in their lives for extracurricular interests and activities that allowed them free time to decompress and relax. As Carrie explained, "You have to make time for yourself. You've got to take care of you to be able to take care of other people." Their interests and hobbies varied, but for all thrivers this time included socializing with loved ones and friends. For two-thirds of thrivers, this personal time also included exercising regularly. None of the thrivers felt work encroached unfairly on their personal time.

The four most veteran thrivers actively tried to create a clear physical separation between work and home. Nearly all preferred to stay late at school or come in early and get everything done so they did not have to bring work home with them. This allowed them to leave work at work, to the best of their ability, and enjoy their free time.

The two thrivers with the shortest amount of teaching experience, Carrie and Hannah, were exceptions to this pattern of creating a strong boundary between work and home.

Interestingly, they bridged this boundary with the similar objective of minimizing stress for themselves. Carrie explained:

> If I have an hour on the weekend, I'd much rather knock off a few things so [the week] is a little less stressful, like emails and things that really don't matter, but they need to be done.

Neither Carrie nor Hannah felt working from home added stress to their lives; to the contrary, they felt it minimized the potential for work tasks to stack up and become overwhelming during the school week.

Finally, doing their best sometimes entailed thrivers acknowledging they reached their emotional limit and needed to step away from an emotionally heightened situation for a short period of time. Nicole explained, "Every once in a while, it's like, 'Okay kids, I'm closed. I open again in five minutes, but right now I'm closed. Ask a friend if you have a problem.'" Nearly all thrivers mentioned stepping away when they felt their internal frustration rise, particularly when interacting with a misbehaving or apathetic student or group of students. Counting to ten before reacting to a frustrating situation was a break strategy used by nearly all thrivers. This emotional break prevented them from losing control of their emotional response to a situation and snapping at a student or reacting in another way they knew they would likely later regret.

Together, these five dominant coping strategies allowed thrivers to successfully manage their work-related emotions and perform their work with a predominant feeling of happiness. Their ability to do so and their desire to continue in their current work may support evidence from the sociological study of workers' emotional lives. Copp (1998) found when workers cannot successfully manage their emotions, they experienced burnout or leave their job altogether. Thrivers expressed no feelings of burnout or interest in leaving their work.

Summary

The prevailing emotional experience of thrivers was happiness in their work. They also experienced work-related frustrations and worries, but they found ways of coping with these emotions such that they did not dominate their work lives. Several patterns emerged related to the work beliefs, professional identities, work relationships and coping strategies of these teachers. All thrivers felt able to realize a large number of their pedagogical beliefs in their work. They believed their work was important and when done well, had the potential to positively influence the lives of their students. They saw teaching as a job to be taken seriously and worthy of hard work, and they believed what was best for students should be central to school decisions and policies. They enjoyed the challenge of fulfilling the multiple roles and responsibilities demanded of them in their work, and they believed their primary role as teacher was to support the personal and academic growth and well-being of their students.

Thrivers felt successful in their work. Their ability to develop relationships with their students and teach them in ways they believed made a difference in their lives was a great source of joy and pride for thrivers. Thrivers felt trusted, respected, supported and appreciated by their administrators and colleagues. They attributed their happiness at work in large part to these positive relationships. The five primary coping strategies thrivers used to cope with their emotional experiences of work included*: reach out to one's social support network, accentuate the positive, empathize with others, be true to one's beliefs* and *create breaks from work.* These strategies allowed thrivers to navigate their emotional experiences of work by accentuating their positive emotional experiences and minimizing or eliminating their negative ones.

Given the high rate of teacher turnover in high poverty schools (Ingersoll et al., 2014; Johnson, et al., 2012), it seems safe to assume not all high poverty elementary school teachers'

emotional lives are dominated by happiness like the work lives of thrivers described in this chapter. To fully understand the emotional lives of high poverty teachers, we must also examine the subjective work experiences of teachers who are less fully happy in their work. In the next chapter, I turn to a second group of teachers whose work lives were characterized by a closer balance of positive and negative emotional experiences.

CHAPTER 4

SURVIVORS' EMOTIONAL LIVES

A second group of teachers that emerged in this study I have labeled *survivors* for the purposes of this analysis. Unlike the thrivers discussed in the previous chapter who were extremely happy in their work, survivors' emotional experiences of work were a more balanced combination of happiness and frustration. On the whole, however, survivors felt greater happiness than unhappiness in their work. There was the largest degree of variation among the emotional experiences of these teachers than among either of the other two groups of teachers in this study. While some variation within any group of individuals is inevitable, clear patterns emerged that distinguished these teachers from their thriver and sufferer colleagues. Examining this group of teachers makes it possible to address the theoretical objective guiding this study, namely, how high poverty teachers emotionally experience their work and cope with their emotional experiences.

The organization of this chapter mirrors that of the previous chapter. I begin by presenting a brief professional profile of survivors, which provides the reader with context for the statements made by the group. I then explore the emotional experiences and emotional coping strategies of survivors, focusing, in particular, on how these experiences and coping strategies relate to survivors' beliefs about their work, themselves and their relationships with others.

Professional Profile

Thirteen teachers made up this theoretical identity group, making it a larger group of

teachers than that of thrivers discussed in the previous chapter. Table 3 provides an overview of

survivors' demographics.

Table 3

Survivors' Demographics

Name	Birth Year	Highest Ed. Degree	Undergraduate Major	Years Teaching Elem.	Position
Robin	1979	Specialist	elementary education	14	EIP support
Rachel	1982	Specialist	business	9	4th grade
Andrea	1980	Master's	communication	8	1st grade
Monica	1983	Bachelor's	elementary education	5	4th grade
Carmen	1990	Bachelor's	early childhood	1	4th grade
James	1968	Master's	human resources	22	3rd grade
Sandra	1986	Master's	music performance	3	5th grade
Krystal	1988	Bachelor's	early childhood	3	3rd grade
Rosa	1977	Specialist	education + psychology	15	4th grade
Teresa	1983	Master's	education	10	2nd grade
Edward	1984	Master's	early childhood	9	2nd grade
Isabel	1983	Bachelor's	elementary education	10	gifted
Barbara	1982	Master's	early childhood	5	ESOL

Ten survivors were regular classroom teachers, one served as an intervention teacher, one taught

ESOL and one taught gifted students as well as a fourth grade math class. The classroom

teachers worked in first through fifth grades. Survivors' number of years of experience teaching

elementary school ranged from one to twenty-two years at the time of our interview, and their

median number of years of elementary school teaching experience was nine years. Nine

survivors were education majors as undergraduates. Nine survivors also had advanced degrees in

education; at the time of the interview, six survivors had Master's degrees and three had

Specialist degrees. Two additional survivors were in Master's degree programs with anticipated

graduation in 2016 (see Table 2).

<div align="center">**Emotional Experiences**</div>

Happiness

  Working with students. Survivors' greatest work joys closely paralleled those of

thrivers. All survivors experienced the greatest joy in their work from their interactions with

students. Like thrivers, survivors loved seeing their students enjoy the learning process. "[I love

to] see them having *fun* at school, having fun learning," explained Rachel, a fourth grade teacher.

Such enjoyment often resulted when survivors found themselves able to embrace authentic

learning opportunities during the school day. Andrea, a first grade teacher, described such a

moment that recently occurred with her students:

> Last week there was ice on the ground for the first time. Then we put it in the sun while
>
> we were playing, and ten minutes later it was melted. They're like, "Woah! It melted!"
>
> "Why did it melt, guys?" "Because the sun has heat!" …That was an authentic kind of
>
> learning about the world around you. That's what makes me happiest… It was just a
>
> happy accident. We were able to turn that moment into a teachable moment right then
>
> and there… and they were *excited* about it. It blew their minds. That was something that
>
> was huge for them, and they probably went home and talked about it… Something they
>
> learned that day that they're excited about enough that they're going to go home and tell
>
> Mom and Dad about [brings me great joy].

This passage reveals the joy nearly all survivors experienced when their students expressed

enthusiasm for acquiring new knowledge. Similar to thrivers, it also reveals the alignment of

survivors' pedagogical beliefs with what is known as a *social constructivist theory of learning* (Vygotsky, 1978). Survivors believed their students learned best by actively building their own understanding of the world around them. From survivors' perspective, learning about curricular concepts through discovery and engaging with them in hands-on ways enhanced students' understanding and best fostered their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Moments of student enthusiasm, such as the one described by Andrea, brought survivors joy, in part, because they validated their constructivist pedagogical beliefs. Nearly all survivors believed it was their responsibility to foster enthusiasm for learning in their students. Edward, a second grade teacher, explained, "When they love to come in that classroom every day and they're excited, when I hear that, I've done my job." When students entered the classroom enthusiastic about a day of learning ahead, survivors felt they were succeeding in their work, which brought them joy.

All survivors also loved the "aha" moments when a concept clicked for students. Monica, a fourth grade teacher, explained: "My favorite sound in my profession is, "*Oh!*" I love to hear that… I get chills." Such moments of student understanding made survivors feel they were succeeding in their work. These moments were particularly joyous when they followed a period of challenge and struggle on the part of the student. Andrea explained:

> Seeing students experience the struggle of the learning process and then the reward of pushing through that struggle to clarity and understanding is highly satisfying.
> It's the kids who start to get it. They struggle with something, they struggle with something, they struggle with something, and then they get it. And they are excited about it. I'm in first grade, so I go from non-readers to readers. I have that particular joy.

Similar to thrivers, such moments validated survivors' belief that challenge and struggle were part of the learning process and that student perseverance eventually led to success. Like their

thriver colleagues, survivors believed this development of a *growth mindset,* or *incremental theory of intelligence* (Dweck, 2006), would continue to serve students well in future learning endeavors.

Helping students set and accomplish their own learning goals also brought survivors joy. James, a third grade teacher, explained:

> I really like seeing students work hard and start achieving their own goals, and [I like] helping them take control of their learning; to see students being able to progress and take some things with them that are going to help them out in the bigger picture of life. Not necessarily, "Did you memorize all the content vocabulary for this unit we're teaching?" but "Did you pick up a skill? Did you figure some things?" Those "aha" moments where the kid's like, "Oh! *That's* how that works. So next time I can do this, this and this, or I can apply this to *this* part of my life, so I can be a better person."

Like his fellow survivors, James viewed himself as a facilitator of his students' learning rather than a transmitter of academic knowledge. This view of the role of the teacher as a facilitator is also consistent with social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Like many of his fellow survivors, James experienced joy when he observed his students make connections, build on their existing understanding of the world and discover ways they could apply their new knowledge. This passage also reveals a moral purpose shared by nearly all survivors in their work. In addition to acquiring academic knowledge and skills, survivors wanted students to develop skills in their classroom that would help them make a positive contribution to society. Monica explained:

> I want you to be a productive citizen in society. That's it. I want you to *be* somebody. If it is a McDonald's worker, you're running that place like it's nobody's business. Whatever

it is, I'm not judging you for whatever path you chose, but if you're able to be the *best* at

what you're doing, then I've done my job.

Survivors believed it was their responsibility to arm students with skills that would allow them to excel in the real world, and they derived pleasure from feeling they were succeeding in their efforts.

Similar to thrivers, another great source of joy for survivors was seeing the growth of students' confidence in themselves as learners. Rachel described experiencing this joy at a recent conference with the parents of one of her fourth grade students. This student struggled in math in third grade, but at the conference, her parents described the change they noticed in her math confidence since the start of the new school year. The student now even enjoyed showing her parents how to do challenging math problems at home. Rachel explained:

It was just so awesome! It was like, "Hell yeah, that's what we *live* for!" That's exactly

why, you know? To make sure that she knows that she can do [math]. And offer her

strategies and different ways and making her feel comfortable with it, versus being like,

"This is always going to be hard for you."

All survivors enjoyed watching their students embrace a positive understanding of themselves as learners. Like thrivers, it was important to survivors that their students knew they believed in their ability to succeed in academic endeavors. Playing an active role in students' learning process by supporting them and making sure the students *knew* they believed in them was central to their understanding of their role as a teacher. When students developed a positive view of themselves as learners, survivors believed they were accomplishing meaningful work.

Like thrivers, survivors also derived joy from the relationships they developed with their students. Caring about students was central to all survivors' professional identity. Sandra, a fifth grade teacher, explained the relationship she strived to achieve with her students:

> I want the kids to know me as more than just their 4th or 5th grade teacher. I want them to know me as, "That was Ms. Jones. She actually cared about my life." That's what I want them to remember about me. Not that I gave them a grade, but that I asked, "How's your life? How are you doing?"

Nearly all survivors wanted their students to understand they valued them as individuals and cared about them beyond their academic achievements in the classroom. Many survivors felt a holistic understanding of their students strengthened the bond they shared with them in the classroom, and several attended extracurricular events in their students' lives to show their support and learn more about students' lives outside of school. All survivors believed an understanding of non-academic events occurring in their students' lives positively informed their interactions with students in the classroom. It was important to nearly all survivors that their students understand they, personally, were in their students' corner and were a supportive part of their lives. Monica explained:

> [The students] know that I'm here for them. If you're in the wrong, I can't back you up when you're wrong. But if you're right and you're being done wrong, I'm here for you, and they know that. Every last kid in here knows if they're getting bullied on a bus, I'm *on* the bus finding out what's going on. I'm not sending an email to anybody. I'm on the bus. I'm walking with you. If I need to drive my car to follow the bus—they know that.

As revealed in this passage, survivors believed part of caring about their students meant advocating for and protecting them to the best of their ability. Knowledge of students' lives and concerns aided such advocacy and protection.

For nearly all survivors, interest in the lives of their students extended beyond the length of the year students spent in their classroom. Sandra explained:

> I tell them all the time, "Invite me to your high school graduation. Invite me to your middle school play. Invite me to your next soccer game. I'll be there." I want them to stay in touch with me.

It brought survivors joy to be able to maintain relationships over time with their students. The relationships themselves were a source of joy for survivors, but so too was the opportunity they afforded survivors to learn of positive news in the lives of their former students. Monica explained:

> I love … see[ing] where they go. I'm invested. I want to see how far you're taking this. I want to see, "Were you paying attention? Were you listening? Are you trying to build a life for yourself?" I like to hear, especially, the good news... like I had two students that got accepted to [a] prep school and they got free tuition. I was like, "We've got to celebrate!" I get excited.

As revealed in this passage, many survivors experienced joy when hearing of the successes of former students, particularly when the successes related to skills the survivor worked to build with those students in the classroom. Such news reinforced the feeling they were successful in positively impacting students' lives.

Working with Parents. A notable difference between the work joys of survivors and thrivers was the joy survivors experienced from interacting with parents. Unlike the majority of

thrivers, many survivors considered building strong relationships with their students' parents among their greatest work pleasures. Sandra explained:

> I *love* their parents so much. Interacting with them, even if it's through an interpreter. I love the relational aspect of it all. Just the way their parents trust me with their kids and trust my opinion.

Mirroring thrivers' work relationships with administrators and colleagues, survivors' positive relationships with parents were characterized by mutual *trust, support* and *respect*. Several survivors noted their most rewarding relationships with parents developed out of initial skepticism on the part of the parent. It brought these survivors joy to know they had successfully convinced the parent they wanted what was best for his or her child and gained the parent's trust, support and respect. In this way, *earning* these characteristics was also a source of joy to survivors.

All survivors believed their students learned best when there was strong understanding and mutual support between the teacher and parent. Similar to their relationships with students, survivors enjoyed when their relationships with parents lasted beyond the length of the school year. They enjoyed receiving emails, phone calls and visits to hear how parents' lives unfolded, including new jobs, weddings, new children and plans for the future.

Working with administrators. Nearly all survivors characterized their relationships with their administrators as relatively positive, thought their enjoyment of these relationships was more reserved than that expressed by thrivers. Many survivors noted the existence of administrator favoritism in their school and considered themselves fortunate to be among the favored teachers. Over three-quarters of survivors believed they could approach their administrators to share concerns about their work. Sandra explained:

Our principal is very open. You can walk in her door and say what you need to say. I

can't say she's going to agree with you every time, but you do have a voice. To our

assistant principals you can pretty much say anything, too, but I don't know that they feel

that they have the authority to change anything. It really does all depend on whether or

not you can get in our principal's office. Sometimes you'll see a change in things,

sometimes you won't, but at least you got to say, "Hey, I don't know if I agree with this

and that." She's really gracious, but she's set on what she wants to do and her vision.

She'll be kind and listen and understand your frustration and kind of contemplate it, but

it's very rare that she'll change what she wants to do. I actually do trust that she does

want what's best for the school, [but] I think sometimes she wants what's best for the

numbers. She's a data driven person and that's hard to deal with sometimes, but on a

personal level, she is really gracious.

This passage reveals the complex view nearly all survivors expressed regarding their

administrators. They liked their administrators on a personal level, but believed the principal was

more interested in raising school test scores than enacting policies that, from the perspective of

survivors, were in the best interest of students. Interestingly, while survivors claimed to feel

comfortable approaching their principals, only about half had ever done so, with only about a

quarter having done so more than a few times. I will explore survivors' reasons for this lack of

communication of their feelings with their principals later in this chapter.

Working with colleagues. All survivors expressed predominantly positive feelings about

their relationships with colleagues in their school. Similar to thrivers, survivors' positive

collegial relationships were characterized by mutual *support, trust, respect* and *appreciation*.

However, survivors had fewer trusted colleagues in their school than thrivers. Since survivors'

discussions of their positive collegial relationships always arose in reference to coping with their work emotions, I will discuss these relationships further in the coping section in this chapter.

Pride

Survivors' greatest experiences of pride in their work in many ways mirrored what brought them joy. Survivors felt proud when they received validation that they were accomplishing meaningful work. James explained:

> The thing I'm most proud of is to see that I really have had a positive impact on people's lives. I'm friends with some of my former students on Facebook, a group of adults now (laugh)… When people stop you like, "Hey, aren't you...?!" I've had parents in the grocery store be like, "Mr. Solomon, remember me?! You had my son so-and-so, you had my daughter so-and-so." To see that, and then to hear people go (excited voice), "Oh, yeah! Well, she's married and has two kids, and they live in so-and-so and she's doing this as a job…" or "My son went on to do this and to do that." Just to know that you helped with that and you were a part of that is, I think, the biggest accomplishment you can have.

All survivors equated accomplishing meaningful work with positively impacting students' lives. Hearing of the successes of former students made survivors proud, because such successes served as validation they had done their job well. As mentioned in the previous chapter, deriving pride from doing good work is consistent with existing teacher emotions research (Frenzel, 2014). Moments of pride also occurred when students were still in survivors' class. Seeing student growth was a particular source of pride, especially when it related to students' orientation toward learning. Rosa, a fourth grade teacher, explained.

My first year, I had a very smart little girl who was doing well in school… I remember at the spring conference her mother said, "Because of you, she now loves reading. She didn't used to *love* reading." That moment when they say, "Because of *you*, this," [makes me proud].

As revealed in this passage, survivors experienced pride when they inspired positive change in students' feelings about learning. Such moments validated survivors' belief that they engaged in important work and that their efforts positively impacted students. Several survivors also experienced pride as they reflected on the impact of their work on a macro-level. Rachel, who worked primarily with immigrant students, explained:

[I feel proud] just seeing that change in what education can do for people, the beginning of it evolving a family. It's not only affecting the child, but the child now is able to teach the parent how to read or [to] interpret for the parent. Seeing underprivileged people more empowered is really great.

This passage reveals the pride some survivors experienced in recognizing the positive impact of their work beyond the classroom. That their work contributed to a larger, transformative process of empowering marginalized populations was highly gratifying.

Mirroring a joy experienced by survivors, nearly all survivors also expressed pride that their students and families enjoyed keeping in touch with them and were excited to share happy events and news from their lives. As described by James, these relationships afforded survivors an opportunity to hear of the successes of former students and often validated their goal of having positively contributed to students' lives. Like their experiences of joy from student relationships, the *relationships* themselves, not only student successes, were something about which many survivors were proud.

Similar to thrivers, a final source of great pride for survivors was earning appreciation and respect from others. As described by Rosa above, sometimes such expressions of appreciation and respect came from parents, but often, too, they came from students and colleagues, and occasionally, even administrators. Several survivors' greatest experience of pride in their work came from receiving a teaching award at their school. Carmen, a first year teacher, described this experience:

> Before [the administrators] gave out the award, they spoke about this person does this, this and this. It made me feel really special. I guess I like affirmation—I like knowing that I'm doing well and I'm appreciated. I like to hear it, because it makes me feel like, "Okay, I'm *doing* something."

As revealed in this passage, it made survivors proud to hear of their good work from those with whom they worked closely. Respect for their expertise and hard work affirmed they were doing their job well and made survivors feel successful.

Frustrations

Survivors also experienced frustrations in their work. These experiences were a more salient part of survivors' work lives than they were in the lives of thrivers. Survivors' greatest work frustrations shared two dominant characteristics: incongruity between their pedagogical beliefs and top-down expectations for their work and dissatisfactory interactions with administrators and colleagues.

Incongruity of pedagogical beliefs. In many ways, the frustration of survivors' pedagogical beliefs mirrored those of thrivers discussed in the previous chapter; however, survivors felt more limited in their ability to *enact* their pedagogical beliefs than thrivers. The central role of standardized tests to the curricular content, pacing and academic assessment of

their students was a primary source of frustration for all survivors. They felt this centrality of standardized testing threatened their ability to teach their students in ways they believed best for them. As discussed earlier in this chapter, students' learning experience was important to survivors, and when this experience was negative, survivors experienced frustration. Instead of engaging in material they felt was relevant to students lives and allowing them to wrestle with academic material that would foster critical and creative thinking, survivors sometimes felt stuck teaching rigid, inappropriately targeted curriculum to their students and engaging in hours of test prep and testing itself. Survivors' role in enacting policies driven by standardized testing with which they did not agree was also a major source of frustration. Their strong relationships with students did not lessen their frustration at being the ones to put students through what they viewed as unengaging learning experiences.

It was sometimes a challenge for survivors to regulate their inner frustration regarding high stakes testing and its curricular influence. Rachel explained:

I notice when I feel pressure [to teach to the test] that it transfers to my kids. They'll feel pressure. When something's hard or laborious, I feel myself expressing that. And they get it. Then they're like, "*Ohhhh God*—." Which isn't fair. Which I hate. We were doing the [state standardized test] practice last week and we still haven't even finished. I fucking *hate* teaching that stuff. My attitude towards it is just like (monotone), "The first thing you do is diagram the question." So they look at it like, "This is a drag," because I'm like, "This is a drag."

Survivors believed it was their responsibility to model a positive attitude toward learning for students, and when they failed to fulfill this responsibility they were frustrated with themselves.

This passage reveals an orientation toward challenging work shared by many survivors, namely, the *type* of work influenced their view of how laborious it felt rather than the quantity of work or amount of time it demanded of them. Lessons that survivors deemed meaningful seemed to energize them such that the subjective experience of this work was less arduous than teaching lessons that they did not think promoted meaningful learning. As revealed in the passage, when survivors felt pressure to teach to the test and struggled to maintain their positivity in front of their students, they sometimes found students reflecting their own negative emotions back to them. This reflection made survivors frustrated with themselves, because they believed students' negative attitude would not improve their experience of engaging with tedious material. I asked Rachel if she thought she could possibly present test prep material to students in such a way that they would not consider it to be a "drag," and she explained:

> I just feel like [testing] is so removed from reality, versus thinking in a different way about how to teach them double digit multiplication. Teachers create these little acronyms, "RACE! Restate the question; something dadadadada." That makes me want to blow my brains out… for the kids! It's to help the kids remember the procedure, but is it fun and exciting? *No*, it's not.

Like many of her fellow survivors, Rachel looked at students' learning experience from the perspective of the students and was frustrated for them. No survivors openly disparaged the tests to students, but a number of them, like Rachel, hated the idea of spending time thinking about how to teach to the test rather than how to enhance students' learning in more meaningful ways. For these survivors, coming up with shortcuts and other methods to improve students' test scores lent a credibility and importance to the testing process they did not believe benefited their students in substantive ways. Their respect for their students and their desire to provide students

with quality learning experiences made it challenging for them to engage in an inauthentic teaching performance with standardized testing material.

Nearly all survivors experienced frustration when they found themselves pulled into the "numbers game" of focusing on improving student performance data instead of focusing on what they felt was best for their students. Sandra explained:

> I want to do what's [considered] excellent, but I forget that how they do on these tests and the interims and [the state tests] really isn't a measure of anything other than a number. But it's a battle for me. I find myself teaching to the test sometimes, and forgetting that I have to empower them. Forgetting that, "All right, I want them to *learn* here." Sometimes I'm like, "I'm going to take my hands off." I'll do projects or things that are not so test-based to get their hands wet. "Let's do this. Let's discover!" Then there's that other part of me, like, "Okay, this [test] is coming up. We've got to get ready for this and that."

This passage reveals how survivors' constructivist pedagogical beliefs conflicted with top-down measurements of student learning, and many survivors found themselves in a frustrating situation in their pursuit of exemplary teaching. Should they try to be exemplary teachers by their own standards or *appear* exemplary to their administrators and district officials? In this passage, Sandra felt herself pulled in two directions between her desire to teach her students in ways that allowed them to discover new concepts on their own and knowing her students would be tested on a very specific set of curricular concepts in the near future. Being considered an exemplary teacher was important to survivors, but so too was actually *being* an exemplary teacher by teaching in a way consistent with their pedagogical beliefs. In this way, many survivors found themselves in an emotional double-bind where they felt frustrated with themselves if they

exclusively pursued what was in their professional best interests, i.e., teaching to the test, and ignored their beliefs about best pedagogical practices, but they also felt frustrated if they followed their personal pedagogical beliefs and engaged in meaningful work with students that was not recognized as such by those in positions of authority in their school and school district.

Similar to thrivers, another great frustration of all survivors was the amount of administrative documentation for which they were responsible in their work. Isabel, the gifted teacher, explained:

> The amount of work that is required to prove that you are doing your job … I think that is the most intense, frustrating, over your head, I-don't-know-how-I'm-going-to-get-all-this-done kind of thing, for sure. I think I'm a pretty good teacher, but I also am competitive and I want people to think that I'm a good teacher. In order to do that, there's so much evidence and documentation [required], and some of it is just show. It requires so much time.

As revealed in this passage, survivors felt overwhelmed, at times, by the bureaucratic paperwork required to prove that they were doing their job well. We can see again the importance to survivors to appear competent and effective in their work. A number of survivors observed the irony that focusing on proving themselves to be good teachers often detracted from their ability to *be* good teachers to their students. Many survivors also wondered if their efforts to document their work was in vain, questioning how much of their carefully completed paperwork was ever reviewed by school or district leaders.

Nearly all survivors felt frustrated at times that teaching was only a small fraction of their job. Like thrivers, survivors believed interacting with students was the most important part of

their work. Monica described feeling assaulted during the school day to complete administrative

tasks while she was working with students:

> "Turn this in," "Make sure you have this done," "Put this on the computer," and "Put that
>
> on the share drive before you leave today." I'm a planner, so I have my plan, I have my
>
> to-do list for the week. Then it's (mimics someone tapping computer keys), "Do you have
>
> that yet? Do you have that yet? Do you have that?" … That is the most frustrating thing:
>
> the emails and the deadlines when you really *have to teach*.

This passage reveals a second frustration of many survivors related to documentation. In addition

to the frustration of having to complete large quantities of paperwork that they believed diverted

their attention from their main job of working with students, survivors were frustrated by last

minute directives to submit various documents during the school day while they were trying to

teach. In a job that demanded their careful organization and planning, it frustrated survivors to

have to make on the fly alterations to their plans and be pulled away from their work with

students to complete paperwork needed by someone in an office far removed from their

classroom.

Working with administrators. While administrators sometimes played a role in

survivors' frustrations described thus far, at times they were a direct source of frustration for

survivors. These frustrations revealed an opposite pattern from the relationships between thrivers

and administrators discussed in the previous chapter: they were characterized by a *lack of*

respect, lack of support and *lack of trust*.

A main frustration of nearly all survivors was the intense pressure they felt from their

administrators for students to achieve high standardized test scores regardless of students'

academic background. James, who worked in a school with a high ESOL population, explained:

There just seems to be more and more pressure [for] everybody to achieve at a high level. And it doesn't matter what students' backgrounds are. The school I work at, there are a lot of ESOL students, a lot of special ed. students, and you still get the pressure of, even though this kid moved to the United States three years ago, we want them to grow and learn at the same rate as other students who have been in the United States for their whole lives. That pressure is just very intense.

Survivors believed their administrators were under pressure from their school district to increase student achievement on standardized tests, but they did not respect that administrators passed on this pressure to them. Survivors wanted to help increase their students' academic knowledge as much as possible in a given year, but they felt administrators often held unrealistic academic expectations for their students and dismissed the real challenges faced by teachers and students, which frustrated them.

Administrators' belief in a direct relationship between student test scores and teacher effectiveness also frustrated survivors. Nearly all survivors spent a good deal of their year differentiating their instruction to make accommodations for students' individual learning needs. When all students across the district took the same standardized test at the end of the school year, however, it frustrated survivors that their administrators expected their students to perform at the same level as students with very different backgrounds. It frustrated them that administrators based their assessment of teachers' overall effectiveness on these test scores. James continued:

[According to administrators], by one set of standards, we should be differentiating for our ESOL students. We should be giving them reading passages at their reading level, we should be making accommodations for the lack of vocabulary in English, especially content vocabulary. We should be making accommodations and teaching to the level that

they're on, to help them become more proficient. But then at the end of the year,

everybody takes the same test. And the teachers are judged by the scores, so when you

have kids who are not English proficient, and they only speak English when they're at

school, because they go home and the parents only speak Spanish or they speak another

language, well, those kids of course are going to take longer to master things in English.

They're going to take longer to be proficient readers in English. So you take those kids

and at the end of the year you give them the test, but then you compare my test scores to

people in other places that don't have any students like that. Their students are all

American born or maybe they have one or two who are non-native English speakers. So

then, how are you going to compare my scores to those scores? Because my kids have a

lot of different challenges, and I had to teach them in a different way and at a different

level to accommodate where they are, but at the end of the day, it's, "Well your scores are

here, so you must not be a proficient teacher."

Despite expending great effort in their work and often helping their students make large

academic gains over the school year, survivors were frustrated by the implication that they were

less effective teachers than teachers in higher performing schools merely because their students'

test scores were lower than the scores of the students in those schools. Administrators' belief that

student and teacher achievement could be measured in such narrow terms frustrated survivors,

because it revealed a limited understanding of their work.

Many survivors also expressed frustration regarding their administrators' lack of high

poverty classroom teaching experience. In particular, survivors believed the expectation of

uniformity across teachers' practices despite teaching vastly different groups of students

stemmed from administrators' lack of classroom experience. Sandra explained:

[Administrators] think, "Well, if this class is doing it, everybody on the grade level should be able to be doing it." It's just not the case. What's lost is lack of classroom experience as an administrator… I would *love* to see you in my shoes for one week. I'd love to see you in so-and-so-down-the-hall's shoes, who's got [many] behavior kids, for just one day, one hour. It's not easy; I feel like that's lost… I don't know that any of them have been in a classroom setting long enough to understand what it's like to deal with vastly different groups of kids… I don't think they understand that. "If so-and-so's doing this, the whole grade level should be doing this." "Let's learn from so-and-so."

Many survivors expressed frustration that their administrators believed in a one-size-fits-all approach to best teaching practices. Teresa, a second grade teacher, explained:

They want everyone to be robots. You put this information in and you're supposed to get this out, kind of thing. That's what I feel when administrators walk in. That it's this completely rehearsed play in that the teacher says this, now let me get somebody with the appropriate response. You're just hoping to God that the child has the "appropriate" response.

As revealed in these passages, survivors had little respect for administrators' inability or unwillingness to see their students as individuals. Some survivors taught a large number of gifted students in their class, others a large number of ESOL, special ed or Early Intervention Plan (EIP) students, and to best meet the individual learning needs of these students required a degree of flexibility in their teaching that administrators often did not recognize.

Another frustration of survivors was administrators' lack of respect for their experiences and feedback. Survivors believed their principals desired competent, "team player" teachers who were supportive of and efficiently enacted their policies and procedures rather than challenging

them. It frustrated some survivors that candid feedback, in the rare event it was requested by the principal, wasn't actually desired and could cause them to fall out of favor with their administrators. Rachel explained:

> I think I was naïve to think that it was all going to be open and honest dialog about what was happening [at the beginning of my career] …. They have a real "no whining" mentality, and I understand that to an extent. People can complain about a lot of stuff. But I feel like, with this particular administration, if you go to them and you say, "This isn't working," they flip everything around on you. So they're like, "Well what do you suggest that we do?" Like, "Don't come to me without a solution. Don't come to me with problems, come to me with a solution.'" Or like, "Well why don't you head up dadadada?" Basically, it being a pain in your ass, then. To get it off their shoulders, they'll flip it around and do the, "Well what can *you* do to—?" It's like, "What I'm saying is, I *can't* do that."

This passage also reveals survivors' frustration at administrators' lack of support when they felt overwhelmed in their work. Interestingly, while nearly all survivors expressed confidence they could approach their administrators to share their thoughts and concerns, only a handful of survivors actually did so. Almost three-quarters of survivors believed their opinion wasn't truly valued by their administrators. Rachel described requesting help in a recent grade level meeting with her administrators to address how teachers could increase their effectiveness with students during the first 30 minutes of each school day. Administrators' expectation was that teachers would complete a calendar and number talk meeting with their classes at this time as well as conduct a Continuous Quality Improvement (C.Q.I.) segment. The primary objective during the C.Q.I. time was to complete their Response to Intervention (R.T.I.) responsibilities. R.T.I. is an

attempt to provide individualized help to underperforming students in the classroom. R.T.I. tasks included reteaching and retesting skills particular students did not master and documenting these efforts for administrative review. Rachel continued:

> I said, "Could anybody please explain to me how to do this?" And it's crickets, because no one wants to say it's impossible. I'm either reteaching, and I'm essentially retelling [students] the test again—we're going through it together, because there's not enough time to reteach and retest in every subject. So I'm walking back through the test with them, modeling thinking and answering and why you should pick this versus that so they can get a better grade, but I don't have time to practice 6 plus 4, 3 plus 7 with the kid who can't add or the kid who doesn't know place value. It's one or the other. Do you want me to retest and reteach, or do you want me to work with this kid who can't count? I can't do both. And usually, the kid's in the same boat. So you're retesting that kid; that kid has never passed a test. It's not like, "You all go retest over here and I'm going to be working with Billy over here," because Billy is always in that group.

This passage reveals an important characteristic of survivors and their relationships with their administrators. As mentioned previously, all survivors desired to do their work well and meet the expectations of their administrators. However, survivors were frustrated when administrators' expectations for their work revealed obvious challenges and contradictions. That administrators were often unable or unwilling to provide helpful feedback and advice regarding these logistical challenges increased survivors' frustration. Their lack of support implied to survivors that teachers' frustrations and concerns related to conditions of their work were a personal, not institutional, problem. In this way, administrators placed the onus on teachers to deal with their negative work emotions and challenging work situations, which frustrated survivors.

It also frustrated survivors that administrators provided so little support to their colleagues, particularly new teachers. Survivors admired the energy and enthusiasm these teachers contributed to the school community, and they grew frustrated watching them struggle to meet the expectations of administrators with little official support or guidance. Isabel explained:

> I remember having a conversation with one [new teacher] and she was crying because she had been getting two's on her evaluations and she couldn't figure out what she was doing [wrong]. She was there all the time and she was working so hard. It was just so sad. It made me so angry. … We cannot beat down these people who are going into education, because there's not going to be anybody left. I feel like it was all very negative… that's a thing I've noticed in both schools I've been at, really, just the lack of support for teachers. For all the weight that is put on these evaluations and the teacher performance, there's really not a lot of help. I feel like the help comes way later after you've already felt like a failure because you've gotten two's on your evaluations. You get that kind of feedback, but you need, then, somebody to come in and really tell you how to do it. Like, "Show me what I'm missing."

While survivors themselves did not receive negative feedback from their administrators, it was hard to watch the emotional impact of poor evaluations on colleagues who were working hard to do their best for the students in their classroom. Survivors were angry that little institutional support existed for these struggling teachers. If a teacher received negative feedback on an evaluation, survivors believed it was the responsibility of the school to provide guidance or mentoring to that teacher so she could improve her practice. It made them angry this lack of

institutional support and negative feedback drove initially enthusiastic, dedicated teachers from high poverty schools.

Another frustration of nearly all survivors was the constant change in school policies and the number of new initiatives in their schools. James explained:

> I've been at this particular school for six years, and we're on principal number three. It is frustrating, because all three principals wanted different things, even though we're at the same school, same population, same district leadership. Everybody has a different idea about how to get it done. … Whenever you have a leadership change, you have a change in the work, you have a change in priorities. This person says, "I don't care if you have this stuff on your board. When I come in your rooms, I want to see you doing this, this and this." And the next person comes in and goes, "Oh, no. I better see this on the wall and I'd better see that, and I want to see *you* doing this." …[But] with the three different leaders in six years, with all the changes and everybody doing things different ways, at the end of the day, student achievement still looks about the same to me. So I can't see where any one of the three people's policies really makes the kids score any higher or achieve any more.

Consistent with James's experience, many survivors had a new principal in their school about every two years. As revealed in this passage, survivors' frustration with new initiatives stemmed in part from the belief that the changes to school policy were not substantive. Survivors felt they were running to keep up with new school policies that often turn out to be remarkably similar in essentials to their predecessors. Administrators grasping at fatuous changes in the hopes such changes would bring about significant learning gains smacked of a desperation for quick-fixes that frustrated survivors. Unlike thrivers, who felt confident their administrators worked to

achieve what was in the best interest of their students, many survivors felt students' best interests often took a back seat to demonstrating increased student performance on standardized tests.

Another frustration related to new school policies and initiatives was administrators' lack of communication regarding the reasons for those new policies and initiatives. It was hard for survivors to fully trust administrators' new initiatives when so little information regarding the reasons behind the changes was communicated to them. Rachel explained:

> The new initiatives [are frustrating]. Rolling out initiative over initiative and sometimes there's follow through, sometimes there's not. I'm the kind of person who needs to see the big picture, "Why are we doing this?" Then I can get on board. Not just doing one thing new and doing it well and then talking about it, and then moving to something else that's new, it's like, ten new things at one time. And then not seeing the relationship with, "Well how is this good for our kids?" Or, "How is it good for us as teachers or as a school?"

Survivors did not see a clear connection between many of the new initiatives in their school and what was in the best interest of the school community. Since administrators rarely directly communicated their reasoning and it was not obvious to the survivors themselves, they were left feeling skeptical of the new initiatives. This lack of communication also frustrated survivors because they felt as a group, teachers' expertise and experiences were not valued by administrators in their school. Barbara explained this frustration:

> [Administrators] come in and they tell us, "We're doing this." We don't know why; we don't know what result we're trying to get from it. We don't know how long, any of that kind of stuff. They do, they've heard it. They know, but they try to keep it simple and they don't tell us everything. If they came in and said, "These scores are like this, so

we're going to try this for this long, we're hoping to get this result. We're hoping this

works. Let me know your feedback," we would feel like we were on a team together.

[But] they come in and say, "We're doing this, because this is not performing." We feel

like, "You all messed up, so here, this is a Band-Aid for you all, try this."

This passage reveals the frustration of survivors for not having a collaborative relationship with administrators in their school. While nearly all survivors believed it was in the best interest of the school community for such a collaboration to exist, instead they felt administrators dictated initiatives without soliciting their feedback before, during or after enactment of the initiative. Many survivors also felt administrators' policy changes and new initiatives carried the implicit accusation that teachers had not adequately done their jobs. This lack of communication and implicit accusation teachers were not meeting administrators' expectations revealed a lack of respect for and trust in teachers that frustrated survivors.

Working with Colleagues. In contrast to the highly positive relationships thrivers enjoyed with almost all of their colleagues, colleagues at times were a source of frustration for survivors. Frustrating relationships with these colleagues were characterized by: *negativity, lack of competency* and *lack of support*. Isabel described the frustration of interacting with overly negative colleagues who revealed a lack of professional competency:

There is somebody on this hallway who is extremely negative. A lot of the stuff she says

is what people think and feel, to a certain degree, but you don't want to be reminded of

that all the time. Like with the testing, we all know that it's excessive. We all know that

it's really not fair to hold teachers *so* accountable for what students do on one day. We all

understand that. Even people who aren't teachers, when you explain it to them, they get

that, too. We really don't need to beat that horse into the ground every time we have a

grade level meeting. And the negativity about some of the students is another thing that really, really bothers me. Hearing things like, "Differentiation is just not working. Differentiation means you're dumbing things down for the kids so they're never going to learn." [That] is *not* what differentiation means. You don't know what it means. Please stop talking. Knowing that we've got a couple of younger teachers on this hallway, especially one who's trying to make a decision about, "Do I want to keep doing this?" Those kind of people *really* don't need to hear that.

This passage reveals several beliefs held by survivors regarding the role of teachers, namely, that they should be professional, supportive and competent in their work. From survivors' perspective, it served no productive purpose to vent obvious frustrations, such as the excessiveness of standardized testing or unfairness of holding teachers "so accountable" for students' test scores, in group meetings. Survivors believed airing obvious frustrations over which they had little immediate control diverted the group's attention from relevant, day-to-day objectives and risked negatively impacting the emotional state of the group. They also disliked hearing colleagues make disparaging comments about students, particularly when such comments revealed a poor understanding of their work. This lack of competency was unprofessionalism and inexcusable, from survivors' perspective, and served as a poor model for newer teachers in their school.

A subset of survivors also experienced frustration with the instructional coaches in their school. This frustration was characterized by a lack of support and lack of competency. Andrea explained:

I don't see them as positions that are useful. They're not in there to help my kids in a meaningful way. Popping in to do a lesson every now and then doesn't affect my kids'

achievement. Being in there *every* day to provide support so you can build the

relationships, build that rapport, is what makes a difference with them… I think we're

wasting valuable staffing points on positions that are meant to support, but are not

actually supporting anybody. Except for maybe administration to do their grunt work.

A subset of survivors did not feel the instructional coaches in their school provided reliable

support in their classrooms, which, from their perspective, was the primary responsibility of an

instructional coach. Interestingly, in all cases, the responsibilities of instructional coaches were

not clearly articulated to survivors by their administrators. All of these survivors worked in

schools which were allotted a certain number of points, rather than a specific amount of money,

to hire teachers; one point represented one full-time teacher. The hiring of an instructional coach

in their school, then, often meant the loss of a classroom teacher, which resulted in larger class

sizes for classroom teachers. Rather than providing consistent support to classroom teachers in

these circumstances, survivors instead found these coaches primarily executed administrative

responsibilities during the school day. Added to this frustration was a belief many of these

coaches lacked the requisite experience to actually support classroom teachers in meeting their

students' individual learning needs. Rachel, who worked in a school with a high ESOL

population, experienced this frustration in a grade level meeting:

> One instructional coach admitted, "I've never taught ESOL kids, so I wouldn't know."
>
> And it's like, "Then *why the fuck* are you here?!" But she got out of the classroom and
>
> she hides behind her laptop, sending emails about, "Why haven't we—?"

Survivors' frustration with inexperienced and unknowledgeable instructional coaches was

primarily directed at the coaches themselves rather than those who hired them. There was no

excuse, from the perspective of these survivors, for not being a competent, supportive resource

for teachers and students, even if that meant the coach had a large learning curve to fulfill this responsibility. That these coaches instead micromanaged the administrative aspects of survivors' work frustrated them.

Robin, the one survivor in this study who was an intervention teacher at the time of our interview, provided an interesting perspective on the tension between support and classroom teachers. She worked as a classroom teacher in her school for over ten years before taking an intervention position, so she did not fit the description of a support teacher with little experience or knowledge of classroom teaching. She did, however, corroborate survivors' belief that a large part of her job, especially in the beginning, was fulfilling a support role for administrators rather than the role she wished, which was supporting teachers and students. For her, administrators' reluctance to officially articulate her roles and responsibilities was highly frustrating, because it made it difficult to challenge them when they pulled her away from scheduled time in classrooms to help them complete administrative tasks.

Robin experienced an immediate change in her relationship with colleagues when she left her classroom position to take on a support role. She explained:

> When I first took this position, the principal tried to call us "coaches", and it just had a bad reputation. Even though I was teachers' friend who they loved and trusted for many years, all of a sudden they did not want to talk as freely [with me] as they would have in the past. It took a lot of reassurance for a few to say, "I'm still the same person. I'm not your evaluator. I'm not running to the principal and telling her what I hear or [you] say.

Based on the negative reputation of coaches in her school, Robin understood her fellow teachers' distrust, but she found herself in a lonely position when she was not accepted by her colleagues. In her experience, the work of being a support teacher was socially isolating until she could

reestablish trusting relationships with her colleagues. In our interview, Robin did not express frustration toward her colleagues for their distrust, but she did express frustration toward her administrators for creating the circumstances that produced this collegial weariness and distance.

Worries

Like thrivers, survivors worried at times about the home situations of their students. Caring about students did not end, for survivors, at the completion of the school day. Nearly all survivors described worrying about the physical, social and emotional well-being of their students outside of school. The weight of such concerns, for many survivors, was an accepted part of their work. At times, it bothered them that they could not do more for their students, feeling limited in their role as teacher to protect their students from difficult situations, but they also respected the boundary that existed between school and home.

Another concern raised by survivors related to *growth mindset* (Dweck, 2008). Isabel explained:

> Unfortunately, I feel like now we don't give kids a lot of chances to make choices and struggle a lot with something—where it's something that they actually want to do and so they're willing to struggle. Kids are hardly ever seeing that.

In a performance based school culture, survivors worried their students were not afforded an opportunity to develop a growth mindset where they focused on the learning *process* over their academic performance. Survivors worried the centrality of standardized testing to students' school experience led them to feel less comfortable taking risks in their learning and encouraged the belief that the ultimate goal of learning was to get the "right" answer. This worry revealed a threat to survivors' personal pedagogical beliefs because such an environment encouraged a

learning mindset that was exactly the opposite of the one they hoped to encourage in their students.

In contrast to thrivers, a final worry of almost half of survivors related to their sustainability in high poverty elementary school teaching. Rachel explained:

I like my kids. I like the people I work with. I believe that what I do makes a difference, even if it's just marginal. But I don't know necessarily if it's a long term thing for me, if I can sustain it, because it is very taxing… You don't get a lot of positive reinforcement. It's just always like kicking you when you're down, "It's not good enough; it's not good enough; it's not good enough." … It can be really discouraging.

While all survivors believed their work was meaningful and afforded the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives their students, many survivors worried about the personal cost of performing their work. Exhaustion and frustration at times took a toll on them, and many survivors worried over time they might lose their positive view of their work and become burned out. It was a scary and unwelcomed prospect to these survivors that they might one day no longer derive enjoyment from or see the value in their work.

Regrets

When asked about their feelings regarding their career choice, over three-quarters of survivors said they would choose teaching again if they could go back in time, though two of these survivors said they would not recommend it as a career to another person. Three survivors were unsure they would choose teaching again, but one of these survivors thought she would still pursue a career in education. No survivors could say with certainty they wish they had pursued a different career path and expressed complete regret of their career choice.

Four survivors planned to leave their current school at the end of the school year. Over half of other survivors considered pursuing a change in schools, but decided against it. Only two survivors had not considered seeking out a position in another school in the foreseeable future. As noted in the previous chapter, since research indicates many high poverty teachers leave their schools each school year (Ingersoll et al., 2014; Johnson et al., 2012), the plan of the majority of survivors' to remain in their schools is worthy of attention, particularly given the emotional challenges they experienced in their workplace. These findings present the intriguing question: What creative ways have survivors found to cope with their negative work emotions such that they are able to continue performing their daily work? I explore this question in the following section.

Coping

Five dominant coping strategies characterized how survivors negotiated their work emotions: *play the game, reach out to one's social support network, empathize with others, set a firm work-life boundary* and *accentuate the positive.* Survivors drew on a combination of surface and deep acting strategies (Hochschild, 1983) to cope with their emotional work lives. These emotional coping strategies shared some similarities to those used by the thrivers described in the previous chapter. Specifically, the final four of these strategies were similar to those employed by thrivers in their work. The strategy that most distinguished survivors' coping from that of thrivers was the surface acting strategy, *play the game*.

Play the Game

A dominant coping strategy of survivors was to *play the game*. This form of surface acting, also drawn on by flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983) and paralegals (Pierce, 1995) in their work, allowed survivors to separate themselves from the work role they played. Hochschild

referred to this separation as a form of "healthy estrangement" (p. 188). James drew on this strategy to cope with his frustration at school:

> We're like, "All right. Let's *play the game*. They're coming around to evaluate you, you
> know you've got to play the game," because at the end of the day, it's about your
> survival, too. You're a teacher and you have a family and responsibilities, and nobody
> wants to lose their job and lose their income, so when the new [administrator] comes in
> and changes things, it's like, "All right. Tell me what you want, and I'll make it look like
> that." The next person comes in, it's like, "What do you want? Okay, I'll make it look
> like that." Because the focus is not at all on how the teachers think things should be
> done, the focus is very much on, "Well, we're the leaders, and this is what we see, so do it
> this way and everything's going to be great."

This passage reveals how playing the game benefited survivors by privately allowing them to preserve an authentic self while publicly presenting a version of themselves they knew administrators' expected of them. While this public version of themselves altered to suit the expectations of particular administrators, survivors were able to keep their personal belief system and understanding of themselves intact no matter who assumed leadership in their school. Playing the game also allowed survivors to "clearly define for themselves when they are acting and when they are not; they know when their deep or surface acting is 'their own' and when it is part of the commercial show" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 188). Acting, for survivors, was a way of asserting control over work situations that frustrated them. Playing the game often helped them deal with their frustration of having little voice in interactions with administrators. They frequently assumed the role of nonthreatening team player, for example, by maintaining a learned silence in group meetings with administrators, while privately rejecting this role and

sometimes even laughing about it with trusted confidants. A drawback to this strategy for survivors, however, was that it never altered the underlying source of their frustrations. In other words, it served to reproduce, rather than fundamentally change, the events that originally caused these frustrations. Another drawback is that existing research suggests an association between workers' reliance on surface acting and their experiences of stress and emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2003; Wang et al., 2011; Zapf et al., 2006). It is possible this reliance on playing the game drained survivors and contributed to their negative emotional experiences of work.

Reach Out to Social Support Network

Like thrivers, all survivors turn to confidants to cope with their negative emotional work experiences and described these confidants as one of the most important emotional resources for them in their daily work. For nearly all survivors, these confidants were colleagues in their school with whom they shared their worries and frustrations and from whom they sought advice.

> I have my confidants, for sure, who you can speak to openly and be like, "This is fucking crazy!" and they're like, "I *know*!" … You have to have those kind of relationships in school. Otherwise you feel so alone, like you're the one who's losing it. A lot of people are in that same boat. (Rachel)

> Having that support of your fellow teachers is very important. In grade levels where people don't get along, I don't know what they do… Last week, I had a rough day with my class. We just fell apart. I had a kid bite another kid, I had another kid throw up, I hadn't seen my EIP support in weeks. I was like, "What is happening here?!" You just go in at the end of the day like, "I need to scream for a second." Then they have their own vents, so you can just kind of have your own little vent session. (Andrea)

These confidants listened to and empathized with survivors when they needed to share their negative work feelings, and their understanding and empathy made survivors feel less alone in their work. Similar to thrivers, it made survivors feel good to be heard and have their negative emotions validated without feeling judged. Survivors carefully chose these in-school confidants, as James explained:

> You always have to have those one or two people that you can go in the room and close the door and just say whatever you want to say. Even if it is negative or it's, "This kid's *really* getting on my nerves today." You can just say what you want to say, but then you just leave it there. It doesn't [go] on Facebook, … it doesn't spread around the building as gossip… You have those moments where you just need to walk in somebody's room and close the door, and have a conversation and then, "Okay. I feel better now. Going back to my room."

As revealed in this passage, *trust* was a crucial characteristic of survivors' relationships with work colleagues in whom they chose to confide their emotional experiences. Survivors made a clear distinction between colleagues with whom they were and were not comfortable speaking openly about their emotional experiences, and they did not worry trusted confidants would share their personal emotional experiences with others in the school. Like thrivers, survivors found sharing their work frustrations often helped minimize these frustrations. After a brief venting session, survivors often felt better and could continue in their work without feeling the need to further ruminate on their frustrations.

A risk of engaging in venting sessions with colleagues, however, was becoming overwhelmed by negative feelings. Rachel explained:

I don't necessarily think that [venting] is always a positive experience, because

sometimes it's like, "Rahhhhh!" and they'll be like, "Rahhhh—!" and it can feel so

defeating. But just to know that there's someone there who understands means a lot.

As revealed in the passage, a potential downside to venting with trusted colleagues was that it

could leave survivors feeling emotionally overwhelmed and powerless in the face of the

circumstances that produced their negative feelings. Nearly all survivors actively avoided the

trap of being sucked into what they viewed as a spiral of negativity. Robin explained:

You're all in the same boat, so yes, [you] have your little venting session, so to speak.

But I found for myself, it was good to go for a little bit to get it out, but then I had to

leave because it would just continue. Some people spiral and get sucked into it, and then

everything becomes negative. You kind of lose focus, I think. To get it out of your

system, to help you regain your focus, I think it is healthy, but when you let that

negativity weigh and bog you down, nothing's ever really going to get better.

Survivors found it worthwhile to engage in emotional sharing with trusted peers, and by being

aware of their own threshold for listening to the concerns and frustrations of colleagues, they

took advantage of the benefits of this form of coping without being overwhelmed by the negative

emotions of others. We will see in the section on *accentuating the positive* later in this chapter

that sometimes survivors removed themselves entirely from venting sessions with colleagues to

maintain their emotional equilibrium.

Similar to thrivers, survivors also drew emotional support from trusted confidants outside

of their school. They found talking to friends and family members outside of work with

backgrounds as educators helped them cope with work frustrations and concerns. These

confidants often possessed a strong understanding of the demands of survivors' work, but were

able to offer a slightly different perspective from that of survivors, which many survivors found helpful. Also similar to the experience of thrivers, nearly all survivors found friends and family with no experience as educators poor confidants for their emotional experiences of work.

> I think that the hardest thing is having friends who have *no* idea about it. They just have no clue what education is anymore. That, for me, is a difficult bridge. It's a lot easier to talk with your friends who are fellow teachers or [other] people who have been in it, because they get it and there's not a lot of explanation. But the people who aren't in it, when you're like, "Oh my God, you wouldn't *believe*—!" It's a real disconnect. It's really hard to convey what's happening. How severe it is; or frustrations. It's the whole, "I went to elementary school and I know what goes on there because I was a kid there." You're like, "Yeah, but that was a different place and time and you were a student." (Rachel)
>
> I can talk to my family about [work], but they don't really get it. They're just like, "Oh, sounds like a rough day," or "Gosh, that stinks," but they don't really know, because they don't understand what's going on at school. I think it's most helpful to talk to other teachers, because they've been there. I talk to my father, who's a lawyer, about it, and he is like… "Fear and loathing!" I'm like, "No no no no. We can't do fear and loathing. This is not the army." (Andrea)

These passages reveal the experience of nearly all survivors when explaining their work frustrations to close friends and family members with no experience as educators, namely, survivors' experiences often got dismissed or minimized because they were not fully understood. As Andrea described, sometimes well-meaning loved ones offered solutions to survivors' work problems that were unrealistic, which was not helpful to them. Sharing with these non-educator

friends and loved ones often made survivors feel isolated, because it accentuated how little these individuals understood of their work. Interestingly, nearly all survivors expressed the belief that virtually no one outside of education understood their work. It is possible that this coping strategy of confiding one's emotional experiences with educators and avoiding sharing one's experiences with non-educators partially explains how these misunderstandings and misconceptions of high poverty teachers' work persist.

Empathize with Others

Empathizing with others emerged as a third dominant coping strategy used by survivors. This strategy was particularly helpful to survivors in dealing with frustrations related to their administrators and leaders in their school district. Specifically, survivors found empathizing with these individuals often alleviated frustration they felt toward them. For example, Monica's greatest work frustration was feeling hounded to complete administrative tasks while teaching her students, and she described how empathy helped her cope with this frustration:

> It's [coming from] people who are not in the classroom. Sometimes that can be frustrating, but I just think, in their position, they don't know what I'm in here doing. If they were the teacher next door, then I would kind of fault them a little bit, but they're not in here with me, and it's probably something coming from someone above them, so that brings me back.

Like Monica, no survivors believed the intention of those who sent micromanaging directives was to antagonize or irritate them. Putting themselves in the position of these administrators and district officials helped survivors realize they were likely unaware of the survivor's daily schedule and activities, and thus, the ill-timed nature of their directives, and wanted only to do their own jobs well. Empathizing with the intense pressure administrators and district officials

were under from their own bosses to demonstrate they were doing good work made the situation less frustrating for survivors.

Sometimes empathizing with administrators' work stress deterred survivors from approaching them to share professional concerns and frustrations. "It's just another pile added on top of their desk," explained Rachel. In this way, empathy as a coping strategy sometimes obstructed candid, open communication between administrators and survivors. Survivors' well-intended effort to avoid overburdening their administrators with stress meant at times they withheld their emotional experiences of work from administrators.

Work-Life Boundary

A fourth dominant coping strategy of survivors was setting a firm *work-life boundary* to prevent work tasks from encroaching on their personal lives.

I think compartmentalizing is a survival thing. It's like, "Okay, I'm driving away now. That stays there. Now it's my time." It's helping me separate, and even the weekends, if I don't have things that I have to do, I don't actively try to plan for next week. I try to keep all that at school so I don't get that overwhelming feeling other places in my life. (Rachel)

I just get everything prepared, and then when I leave, I'm focused on whatever I'm doing, because if you take all that with you, it really will burn you out. … If I have a student that's like, "My family is going through a rough time," and they tell me that on a Friday, *of course* I take that with me on the weekend. But as far as to-do [lists], I love what I do, but I do not take that home. (Monica)

I have made a very conscious effort to stay at work if I need to stay at work, come in on the weekends if I need to come in on the weekends, but when I leave, the only things I

want to take with me are things I'm choosing to think about. Some of them are bad

things, like things I'm going to pray about, but I try to make them things that have to do

with the kids. I try not to worry about evaluations or any kind of paperwork item, like the

stuff that does not matter. (Isabel)

These passages reveal the concerted effort of nearly all survivors to *physically* separate their

work responsibilities from their personal lives. With one exception, all survivors worked to

accomplish their professional tasks at school so they could leave school work in the workplace

and enjoy their personal lives in their free time. The one survivor who did not follow this pattern

was the first year teacher, revealing a similar pattern to that which emerged among thrivers in the

previous chapter. It is possible this pattern indicates that the creation of a work-life boundary is a

coping strategy teachers develop over time. Like veteran thrivers, all survivors found it important

to engage in activities away from school that allowed them to decompress and reenergize. For

many survivors, such activities included spending time with friends and loved ones, spending

time outdoors and for those with a strong faith, maintaining an active role in their church

communities.

The above passages also reveal again the centrality of caring about students to survivors'

self-understanding. Unlike aspects of their work related to evaluations or documentation,

survivors believed caring about students was one of the most meaningful parts of their work, and

they did not resent its presence in their lives away from school. When survivors were aware of

challenging situations in their students' lives, as described by Monica and Isabel, they actively

chose to think about or pray for those students in their personal time.

Nearly all survivors found prioritizing their work tasks made it easier to create a firm

boundary between work and home. Edward explained:

You have to be able to prioritize. You have to say, "That is really important.
That's really important. You know what? I can put this off. That doesn't have to
get done right now." … I don't lose any sleep at night. At the end of the day, I
know that I'm serving my students and I'm doing the absolute best for them with
every intention in mind. I think as long as the teacher can truly say that, and that's
the truth, then they should be able to leave work at work. I've seen it take a toll on
people, on people's relationships, on people's family, on their well-being, on their
health. I am good about just, "That's enough. I've done what I can do, and it's
time to go."

Survivors did their best to control their own work schedule and itemize the most important of
their work tasks and responsibilities to complete. They rarely allowed themselves to be pulled
into work situations they felt exploited their personal time and energy. As revealed in this
passage, acknowledging to themselves that they gave their work their best effort helped survivors
leave work at work. In addition, focusing on doing one's best helped direct survivors' attention
toward accomplishing their personal purposes in their work. Sandra explained:

I had to get to a point where I'm like, "All right. I know that I'm doing the best for these
kids that I can and I work hard and I can't work 24/7. I have a husband and now I have a
daughter, and I just have to shut my door and do what's right for the kids I see in front of
me, and be okay with making some mistakes along the way… You get wrapped up in
trying to check off every single box, and then you realize as soon as I check this box off,
I forgot to check that box off… I had to hone more in on, "Are they learning and are they
discovering things? Are they having fun? Am I a teacher that they want to be around? Or
am I teacher that's caught up and worried about what I'm going to look like?"

For nearly all survivors, focusing on what was most meaningful to them in their work liberated them to some degree from experiencing lingering negative emotions in their work. No survivors believed it was possible to accomplish everything expected of them in their work, but knowing they had done their best often allowed them to leave school without feeling guilty or frustrated that additional work tasks remained. In this way, doing one's best for students helped survivors feel successful in their work even if they did not "check off every single box" on the list of administrators' expectations.

Accentuate the Positive

A final dominant emotional coping strategy of survivors was to *accentuate the positive* in their work. James explained: "I think [some frustration] is just part of life. No matter what [work] you do, you have your highs and your lows, and everything kind of cycles around." Survivors believed they would derive little emotional benefit from dwelling on their negative work emotions and preferred to actively focus on positive contributions they *could* make in their work. Actively maintaining a positive outlook in their work helped survivors weather frustrating times and maintain a sense of optimism about high poverty teaching in general. Rachel explained:

> I honestly think just having a positive outlook [helps you survive]. The more positive—
> not to mean naïve—but the more positively you can think about what you're doing, the
> longer longevity you have.

As revealed in this excerpt, many survivors believed being positive was a crucial component in their ability to sustain in a high poverty elementary teaching. An important distinction existed for them between being *naïve* and *positive* in their work. Survivors did not respect those who put an overly positive spin on work situations and circumstances; these adults were always

administrators or instructional coaches, in survivors' experience. This positivity revealed a naiveté and "out of touchness" with teachers' work survivors found frustrating. As noted previously in this chapter, however, survivors also did not respect those adults in their school who constantly ruminated on the trials and tribulations of their work in group settings; in survivors' experience, these individuals were always colleagues. Part of accentuating the positive, for survivors, was avoiding these colleagues' negativity. Barbara explained:

> [The work] can get really stressful. I try to isolate myself from those situations [with colleagues] when it's not professional, lunch time and stuff like that when we get off task, because I am the type that gets very stressed out. I know everyone needs to talk about it, but I don't need to carry their stress; I have my own. Sometimes I don't like to know that, because I'm like, "Oh God, what if I come across that?!" I've tried to stay away from that, in that sense. Outside of school, I hang out with them and stuff, just not when they're in those sessions at lunch when they're just completely [venting]. I can't handle that. I try to walk away from those things… I don't want to internalize anyone else's stress.

When survivors were in a situation in which they could remove themselves from negative conversation, for example, in the workroom, at lunch, or in a colleague's classroom before or after school, nearly all found it helpful at times to do so. This separation of self from others' negative emotions prevented survivors from internalizing others' negative emotions themselves. Edward explained: "You can walk down the hallway and tell when it's happening. You just go away from it." When working in a collaborative setting, such as a grade level meeting, sometimes survivors avoided colleagues' negativity by redirecting negative conversation in a

more positive direction. This redirection often prevented survivors from having to listen to and internalize an overwhelming number of colleagues' frustrations and concerns.

Similar to thrivers, a subset of survivors believed their strong faith helped them maintain a positive outlook in their work. Several survivors relied on daily prayer to navigate their negative work emotions. Sandra explained:

I know that I can't do [this work] without praying. If I was just going off of my own strength and my emotions, I would be a mess and my kids would hate me; I would be a horrible teacher. I need God's grace and his mercy to cover me every day. [Sometimes] I find myself doing it without praying, and I can tell I'm getting agitated, I'm getting frustrated. But then I have to get back in my quiet place and go, "All right, Lord. I need you to help me, because you put me here and you've got a plan for this. I feel like we're burning kids out with the numbers—I've found my kids being burned out—but then at the same time, I have to remember that God knows what's going on. He knows that these kids are having to work this hard, and he put me there, so what can I do to alleviate that? I have to rest on that. I'm not good at it all the time, but sometimes I am. Some days I'm agitated, because I know the math interim [test] is coming up and that the following week, I have to defend the scores. And some days I'm like, "God's got this. He knows these kids. He knows what I'm doing. I have to let go." It's just a kind of back and forth battle. To me, the only thing I rest on is prayer. That's it. I can't do it without it.

As revealed in this passage, frustrations faded for survivors who believed that a higher power oversaw the direction of their work lives. When frustrations or concerns arose, such as in Sandra's case, seeing her students growing burned out by the intensity of standardized testing

and data collection, it reassured these survivors to fall back on their strong faith. They felt better knowing this higher power was protecting and looking out for them and their students.

All survivors felt retaining a sense of perspective and remembering one's purpose also helped them maintain a positive outlook in their work. They found it helpful when feeling overwhelmed or in moments of frustration to remember that *teaching students* was their main reason for engaging in their work. Monica explained: "I am reminded that this [frustration] is just a small deal that's taking place in this moment. It's not eternal, so don't make it a thing." [The teaching is] what I'm here for." Often these frustrations were not related to students and helped survivors redirect their focus to what mattered most to them in their work.

> You've got to remember why you are a teacher, because you know that test will never show you what these kids know. It will never show you everything they know. You've got to know that *you* made a difference. … That needs to be your gratification. That needs to be why you wake up. They are going to learn today. They're going to learn tomorrow, and if they do, "*Yes!*" (Edward)

> You just have to take it one day at a time… You try to do the best you can and realize what you can do for them is better than what you think you are doing for them. (Rachel)

Believing in their positive contribution to students' lives, regardless of the results of official assessments of student learning, helped survivors feel good about their work. It was helpful, too, to remember they were often their own greatest critic and to back off of their self-criticism enough to recognize their hard work was positively impacting students' lives.

Summary

The data presented in this chapter revealed patterns that arose in the emotional lives of survivors. Like the thrivers discussed in the previous chapter, survivors believed their work was

important and meaningfully impacted students' lives. Nearly all survivors' greatest moments of

joy and pride in their work came from interactions with students and parents. It was important to

survivors that they be *caring, supportive* and *effective* teachers. They saw themselves as

advocates for and protectors of their students.

Survivors experienced a higher degree of frustration in their work than the thrivers

discussed in the previous chapter. It was important to them to be successful teachers, but their

own beliefs of success were grounded in constructivist theory and a focus on the learning process

rather than student performance. When these beliefs did not align with their administrators'

priorities for the school and administrators' beliefs about success, survivors experienced

frustration. To meet their own standards of excellence and those of their administrators was

sometimes a struggle for survivors, and they felt less fully able to enact their pedagogical beliefs

than thrivers. Nearly all survivors experienced frustration at times that directly related to their

administrators. Survivors liked their administrators on a personal level but they disagreed with

some of the professional decisions made by these individuals. Administrators' focus on

increasing student performance on standardized tests, unwillingness to recognize the

individuality of students, lack of experience in high poverty teaching and lack of openness to

communicating and collaborating with teachers made it difficult, at times, for survivors to trust

and respect them. Survivors frequently felt unsupported by their administrators as they attempted

to enact school initiatives, and they questioned the benefit to students of their school's constantly

changing policies. Unlike thrivers, who felt confident their administrators worked to achieve

what was in the best interest of their students, many survivors felt students' and teachers'

interests often took a back seat to demonstrating increased student performance on standardized

tests in their school. Another pattern that distinguished the emotional lives of survivors from

those of thrivers related to their relationships with colleagues. While colleagues were a tremendous emotional resource for survivors, they enjoyed fewer positive relationships with their colleagues than did thrivers. At times, negative, unsupportive and unknowledgeable colleagues were a direct source of frustration for survivors.

Like thrivers, survivors were able to find ways of coping with their negative work emotions so that they did not dominate their work lives. The five primary coping strategies survivors used to negotiated their emotions included: *play the game, reach out to one's social support network, empathize with others, set a firm work-life boundary* and *accentuate the positive.* The strategy of *play the game* most distinguished survivors' coping from that of thrivers. While this coping strategy helped survivors maintain an authentic *self* in the face of frustrating work situations, it also served to reproduce those situations for survivors. Overall, survivors coping strategies allowed them to minimize worries and frustrations in their work and feel successful in their efforts to positively contribute to students' lives. Nearly seventy percent of survivors planned to continue teaching in their current school in the foreseeable future.

The data presented thus far in these two chapters reveal the emotional lives of teachers who, on the whole, felt they were extremely happy or pretty happy in their work. These data do not tell the full story of the emotional lives of high poverty elementary school teachers, however. Survivors' accounts of some of their colleagues in this chapter support the assumption that not all high poverty teachers are happy in their work. What patterns exist in the emotional work lives of teachers who are unhappy teaching in high poverty elementary schools? How do their subjective emotional experiences and ways of coping distinguish them from the teachers discussed thus far? In the following chapter, I turn to the final group of teachers in this study to investigate these questions.

CHAPTER 5

SUFFERERS' EMOTIONAL LIVES

Unlike the thrivers and survivors discussed in the previous two chapters, the emotional

work lives of the final group of teachers in this study were dominated by negative emotions, and

they struggled to cope with these emotions in their daily work. I have labeled this group of

teachers *sufferers* for the purposes of this analysis. Stress and exhaustion were central

characteristics of sufferers' work lives, and some felt the onset of burnout. Examining the

emotional work lives of these teachers allows me to address the guiding theoretical objective in

this study of understanding how high poverty teachers emotionally experience their work and

cope with their emotional experiences.

The organization of this chapter mirrors that of the previous two chapters. I begin by

presenting a brief professional profile of sufferers to provide the reader with context for the

statements made by these teachers. I then explore the emotional experiences and emotional

coping strategies of sufferers, focusing, in particular, on how these experiences and ways of

coping relate to their beliefs about their work, themselves and their relationships with others.

Professional Profile

Seventeen teachers made up this theoretical group, making it the largest group of teachers

in this study. Table 4 provides an overview of survivors' demographics. Twelve sufferers were

regular classroom teachers, one served as an EIP teacher, one taught ESOL, one was a support

teacher for grades K-3 and one taught her school's science special. The classroom teachers

worked in kindergarten through fifth grades. One classroom teacher had recently retired, but

worked in a high poverty elementary school within several months of our interview. Sufferers'

number of years of experience teaching elementary school ranged from one to twenty-one years

at the time of our interview, and their median number of years of elementary school teaching

experience was 14.5 years. Fourteen sufferers were education majors as undergraduates. Twelve

sufferers had advanced degrees in education; at the time of the interview, eight sufferers had

Master's degrees and four had Specialist degrees. One additional sufferer was in a Master's

degree program with anticipated graduation in 2016.

Table 4

Sufferers' Demographics

Name	Birth Year	Highest Ed. Degree	Undergraduate Major	Years Teaching Elem.	Position
Jill	1953	Master's	elementary education	20	2nd grade
Tiffany	1972	Master's	elementary education	20	2nd grade
Phyllis	1961	Specialist	early childhood	21	2nd grade
Alice	1978	Bachelor's	early childhood	10	3rd grade
Grace	1983	Specialist	early childhood	10	2nd grade
Jacqueline	1992	Bachelor's	early childhood	1	3rd grade
Diane	1965	Master's	S.S./science education	13	1st grade
Mark	1966	Specialist	health + physical education	8	4th grade
Sally	1990	Bachelor's	early childhood	2	2nd grade
Peggy	1984	Bachelor's	early childhood	9	kindergarten
Camilla	1981	Bachelor's	early childhood	8	4th grade
Marquise	1987	Master's	elementary education	4.5	5th grade
Patricia	1977	Master's (x2)	music performance	12	4th grade
Wendy	1975	Specialist	early childhood	16	science
Karen	1964	Master's	elementary education	10	instructional support
Victoria	1979	Master's	early childhood	10	EIP support
Anna	1983	Master's	French + comparative lit.	9	ESOL

Emotional Experiences

Frustration

In contrast to the previous two chapters, I begin my investigation of the emotional lives of sufferers with their negative emotional experiences, since these experiences dominated their work lives. In some ways, sufferers' frustrations mirrored those of thrivers and survivors. Like survivors, sufferers' relationships with administrators were a primary source of frustration in their work lives, but the intensity and constancy of these frustrations exceeded those of survivors.

Working with administrators. Several patterns emerged related to sufferers' relationships with their administrators: they were characterized by a *lack of trust*, *lack of respect*, *lack of support* and a *lack of appreciation*. The first three of these characteristics mirror survivors' frustrations with administrators, but as mentioned above, were experienced more intensely and regularly in sufferers' work lives. *Lack of appreciation* distinguished sufferer's relationships with administrators from those of thrivers and survivors.

A primary frustration of sufferers, like survivors, was the central role of standardized tests to the curricular content, pacing and assessment of their students. Sufferers believed this centrality of standardized testing created a high pressure environment that thwarted their ability to engage in meaningful teaching and learning with their students. Like thrivers and survivors, sufferers' pedagogical beliefs aligned with constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and a focus on learning process over student performance on standardized tests. A fundamental role as a teacher, from their perspective, was to embrace the individual interests and needs of the students in their class. Anna, an ESOL teacher, explained:

> You have to find what's interesting to them, and you have to find the approach that works
>
> for them. You have to just connect with them on a personal level. They're not going to
>
> respond to you if they don't think you like them or care about them.

Sufferers were frustrated that regimented curricular guides made it difficult to incorporate

student interests into the curriculum. Similar to thrivers and survivors, caring about students was

central to sufferers' identity, and they were frustrated when school policies and procedures

impeded their ability to care for and establish connections with their students. Jill, a second grade

teacher who recently retired, explained:

> Trying to do your job, you're trying to connect with the kids . . . . I [was] very frustrated
>
> trying to do what I was educated to do, what's best for kids, and the climate was
>
> completely the opposite of that.

Sufferers were frustrated by the rigid, depersonalized teaching expectations in their school; they

did not believe these expectations fostered meaningful student learning. Sufferers believed

learning to think critically was crucial to students' long-term success, and they did not believe a

high-pressure environment where students learned to quickly find the "right" answer to multiple

choice problems built strong critical thinking skills. Camilla, a fourth grade teacher, explained:

> Anything that is worth pursuing and actually being proud of, it takes time . . . . We
>
> literally rush through everything, pray to God that [students] have the basics, and then we
>
> expect miracles. That's not how it works . . . . We're trying to teach students to take tests
>
> instead of teaching students to *think*.

Nearly all sufferers were frustrated by the pressure they felt to race through curricular material

regardless of student mastery. They saw themselves as facilitators of student learning and

believed teaching rigorous content too rapidly amounted to "cramming content down students'

throats," which they believed was detrimental to students' school experience and long-term learning. Some sufferers were hurt and others were angry by the micromanagement of their teaching by school administrators. They interpreted this micromanagement as a lack of trust in their ability to effectively teach their students without strict oversight:

> The way the [school policies] are structured, it's very micromanaged, telling you, "This week, do this. The next week, do this." I'm more of a, "You tell me what to teach, and I *will* teach it. Just trust me, and I will. (Alice, a third grade teacher)

> I know the strategies that work in my classroom, and I'm sick and tired of you telling me what I need to do! Give me the standards, but allow me the flexibility and the autonomy to do what I need to do. Stop controlling my life! (Camilla)

As revealed in the passages, sufferers felt they had little autonomy or control over what, when or how they taught their students, and it bothered them that they were not able to tailor their teaching to meet the individual needs of the students in their classroom. Many felt they were setting students up for failure by not allowing them enough time to master particular knowledge and skills before assessing them and moving on to the next curricular standard. This lack of trust in their teaching left many sufferers feeling demoralized:

> None of the administrators think that teachers are smart enough to really do their job. When you are constantly being told you have to do it this way and you can't do it this way, it just makes you feel like, "Well what's the point of me even being here?" (Jill)

Sufferers experienced disappointment when their creative, interactive lessons were not appreciated by their administrators, and were frustrated administrators valued uniformity over what sufferers considered to be outstanding lessons and activities. Nearly all sufferers believed hands-on learning activities enhanced their students' understanding of curricular concepts and

enjoyment of the learning process. "[But] it's almost as if the school goes, 'We don't really want hands-on.' They want that wall right there, which is painted prison gray. They want sterile, organized," explained Will, a fourth grade teacher. It frustrated many sufferers to feel unable to teach their students in the exciting, engaging ways they desired, and a sense of lost opportunity weighed on them as they performed the formulaic lessons expected of them.

Like thrivers and survivors, sufferers also held a moral purpose in their work to teach students skills that would help them be successful contributors to society. "I just feel like we're failing our kids the way that we're teaching them. I don't feel like we're teaching them to be productive citizens," said Anna. Many sufferers found themselves growing increasingly discouraged, frustrated and exhausted by their inability to reconcile their own work beliefs and purposes with the expectations of their school leaders.

A distrust of administrators' intentions behind new school policies and initiatives distinguished sufferers from their thriver and survivor colleagues. Nearly all sufferers believed personal ambition drove these initiatives and policies rather than concern for students and the school community:

> [The school policies] are more *administrative*-focused rather than *child*-focused. They're saying, "We're doing what's best for the children," but they're not *really*, they're doing what's best to get their data. (Tiffany, second grade teacher)

> You can tell that [our administrators'] careers are not going to end as an administrator at an elementary school. You know they want to move up, so we are going to do whatever they can to make themselves look good, make the school look good, so they can move up. Unfortunately, they don't look at the students, they don't look at the teachers who might get the downfall. (Jacqueline, third grade teacher)

> [There] is this shiny, pretty veneer that [the principal] would like to paste on everything
>
> to look really good, and not actually care so much about how it is on the inside. (Wendy,
>
> science special teacher)

As revealed in these excerpts, many sufferers believed administrators' desire to "look good" to district officials led them to initiate school policies without much regard for the consequences to students and teachers. Sufferers had little respect for what they considered administrators' focus on what was best for their own careers at a cost to students. They firmly believed new initiatives should make substantive contributions to student learning rather than merely impressing district officials.

Part of administrators' determination to impress district officials, from sufferers' perspective, entailed quantifying as much as possible of elementary school life. Sufferers were required to collect large quantities of data on their students that often did not get interpreted or used to inform their teaching practices. Jacqueline explained:

> They haven't laid out how they want us talking about data or how they want us
>
> interpreting data. I feel like right now they want to see any type of data so that when
>
> people from the county come in, they can see that we're using so much data in our
>
> classrooms. There's data everywhere in our school, but it's not really being interpreted
>
> and utilized. It's still with that putting on a show.

As revealed in the passage, sufferers were frustrated by the collection and display of large amounts of data that seemed to be more about "putting on a show" than informing teachers' practices, and ultimately, student learning. It bothered them that their administrators were more interested in collecting vast quantities of data than in thoughtful, quality data analysis. Since administrators expected teachers to stick to a rigid curriculum, no matter what practice test

scores revealed of students' knowledge and skills, sufferers were also frustrated their students were required to take so many interim and practice tests for official "data" on their progress. Sufferers believed students' class time would be better spent engaged in learning activities to actually *build* their knowledge and skills. Sufferers felt less control over their role in the school data game than survivors, and perhaps for this reason, expressed more anger with administrators than with themselves as they described their inability to reconcile administrators' data expectations with their pedagogical beliefs.

Work overload was another primary frustration of sufferers. Often sufferers' experiences of work overload were exacerbated by administrators' micromanagement of their work. Like survivors, sufferers were frustrated by the overwhelming number of tasks administrators expected them to complete:

> There are just *too* many expectations for teachers . . . . With the topic of data analysis and this *constant* push of data, data, data, you have to document everything. You have one colored conversation with somebody, you have to write it down, just in case. The new method of evaluation, just to get evaluated, it's *unbelievable* how much paperwork we have to do. There are too many responsibilities and expectations on the teacher. It's a part-time job just to manage the supplies that my kids use, let alone teaching and planning to teach, and dealing with discipline. It's a lot. (Patricia, a fourth grade teacher)
>
> It's too much. It has always been too much . . . . As many times as we said, "Choose one thing and stick to it for the year and [let's] get really good at it," [our administrators] never did that. It was always like, "Here's another thing." Here's another thing. Oh, and you have twenty ESOL mod's due by the end of this week." It was just a pile on. Every

day there seemed to be one more thing they were asking of the teachers, who never had

enough time anyway to get all their stuff done with the kids. (Victoria, EIP teacher)

The experience of work overload has long been associated with occupational stress and burnout

(Byrne, 1999; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Mattingly, 1977; Smylie, 1999). The high number of

administrative tasks for which sufferers were responsible in addition to their teaching

responsibilities heavily contributed to their feelings of overload. While the micromanagement of

administrative work tasks was an occasional source of frustration for survivors, sufferers

described such micromanagement as a constant work frustration. Similar to the

micromanagement of their classroom interactions with students, many sufferers believed

administrators' micromanagement of their administrative responsibilities demonstrated a

frustrating lack of trust in them. And often, sufferers saw little benefit of these tasks to their

actual work with students. Sally, a second grade teacher, explained her frustration at having to

turn in detailed, scripted lesson plans weekly to her administrators:

> They want [the plans] scripted, word for word what you're going to say, which I don't
>
> think is right, because that's not how I teach. If something comes up in a conversation
>
> that we're having on the carpet, I'm going to go with it. But if they were to come in and
>
> observe and that wasn't on my lesson plan, I would get knocked for that.

Sufferers felt pedagogical tools such as lesson plans should be helpful to *them*, but they rarely

felt this was the case. The detailed, regimented expectations for such tasks often overwhelmed

them. Like survivors, it was important to sufferers to appear competent and effective in their

work. They wanted to meet the expectations of their administrators, but they felt these

expectations were more about exerting control over teachers or making the administrators look

good than enhancing their work with students. Interestingly, unlike thrivers and survivors, nearly

all of whom sometimes let certain of administrators' expectations go, nearly all sufferers attempted to meet their administrators' many demands. Given all teachers in this study said it was impossible to meet *all* of administrators' expectations, it seems likely that sufferers' attempt to do so contributed to their feelings of overload, frustration and exhaustion. "I get so exasperated with them. I'm just like, 'Well I don't know what else to do, I'm doing my very best for you!'" exclaimed Tiffany. Helplessness sometimes mixed with frustration at not being able to meet administrators' unrealistic expectations. No matter how hard they worked, sufferers felt the constant press of negative feedback from administrators implying what they were doing was not good enough. While thrivers and survivors primarily felt successful in their work, feelings of success occurred less frequently for sufferers. Sufferers' efforts to prove themselves to be good teachers and meet the demanding expectations of their administrators drained them and made them feel they had less energy to actually *be* good teachers for their students, which was highly frustrating to them.

There was bitterness and resentment among sufferers for the encroachment of work on their personal time, particularly administrative tasks unrelated to their work with students. They resented the "go above and beyond" mantra of their administrators to, for example, be the first school to complete district tasks, complete extra documentation for district officials, perfect the structure and appearance of lesson plans, add clipart to beautify class newsletters and fulfill social media responsibilities. Sufferers attributed all of these expectations to making administrators look good rather than improving the education of their students. Several sufferers were even expected to set up a twitter account and tweet positively about their school. Sally, a second grade teacher, explained:

[The tweeting] is very forced, and it's to make [our principal] look better. When you

click on that hashtag, anybody that she follows or anybody that follows her clicks on that

hashtag, they see all these teachers are tweeting about this and that [positive experience],

but it's really not like that. We're required to tweet. It's not like we're doing it willingly .

. . . Tweeting, is that really benefiting me or the kids? No, it's frustrating me, because it's

an extra thing I have to do.

As revealed in the passage, sufferers resented such social media expectations for being one more

non-teaching related task for which they were responsible. Interestingly, very few sufferers dared

to defy such expectations, and I will explore sufferers' reasons for compliance in the section on

worries and fears later in this chapter. For some sufferers, the constant stress of work overload

and trying to meet administrators' demands led to health problems. A number of sufferers

experienced dramatic weight loss, migraines, prolonged illness and several were hospitalized due

to a work-related illness.

Evaluations were another source of frustration to survivors, particularly negative

evaluations. Sufferers worked hard at and cared deeply about their work, and having

administrators question their competence and effectiveness offended them. It particularly

bothered them that negative evaluative feedback often seemed petty or arbitrary. For example,

Tiffany received a "needs improvement" score on her first official evaluation of the year, which

took place during a math lesson. Her principal noticed three students' were unengaged during a

short part of the lesson, and chastised Tiffany for not stopping the lesson to "provide dry erase

boards" to refocus them. Tiffany acknowledged she would love for all of her second graders

students to be focused at all times during the school day, but she did not feel this was a realistic

expectation for seven-year olds, and she felt powerless to control the attention of every single

student in her classroom at every single moment throughout the school day. "I'm not God!" she exclaimed with frustration. But it seemed to many sufferers that administrators *did* expect omniscience of them in their daily work. They sensed there was no way to escape negative evaluative feedback when their administrators looked for any possible infraction to mark down an evaluation. It also hurt some sufferers' feelings to discover their classroom evaluations were subjected to a level of scrutiny other teachers' evaluations in the school were not. Tiffany continued:

> I feel like they're coming in looking for places that they can put "areas of growth," because *they* need to show the county that they're raising their data. They're having to hit targets and they're having to show teacher growth. I think that sometimes they come in looking for things so that they can give somebody a "needs development" or given somebody an "inefficient," so that later in the year they can give them a "proficient" or a "needs development" and show that growth . . . . It used to feel like they would come looking for the good things going on, and now they come in looking for the negative things.

As revealed in the passage, nearly all sufferers were suspicious of evaluation scores that were subjected to low-balling early in the school year so administrators could demonstrate annual teacher growth on their own performance evaluations. They resented this artificial "teacher growth." Tiffany described a lesson observed by her principal later in the year as "horrible," but she received passing marks in all evaluated areas. Sufferers welcomed substantive, constructive feedback on their teaching practice, but they rarely received such feedback. Experiences such as Tiffany's made sufferers believe the evaluation process was misleading and ineffective, and they were frustrated it had real consequences for their record and their career.

Lack of respect for the experiences and concerns of teachers was another great frustration of sufferers. Jill described her attempt to discuss her frustrations regarding the evaluation process in a mid-year accountability conference with her principal:

[The principal] started the timer on her phone and went over the [evaluation form] quickly and said, "Do you have any questions?" I said, "I don't have a question, but I have some comments. I don't really understand how you can evaluate a teacher based solely on you going in for a few minutes and then looking at her data. I feel like you come in our classrooms with your iPad, all of you, and you sit with your head down and you're on your iPad, click, click, click, but you're not interacting with the children. You don't even really know these children. You don't know our population. [You] come in, look around, take pictures with your iPad, and walk out . . . . I don't feel like you are really engaged in what we're doing, you're just filling out a checklist."

She just kept saying it wasn't her fault it was the county's, they wanted them to get all these [evaluations] done and she had to get them done. She wasn't rude to me, but it was my five or ten minutes, and as soon as that timer went off that was the end of it . . . . For me, as an educator trying to have a conversation with my principal and the timer goes off and I'm done . . . I felt it was completely disrespectful . . . I think that says to a teacher, "I don't really value what you're saying."

As revealed in the passage, sufferers were highly frustrated by their principal's the lack of appreciation for their frustrations and concerns. Sufferers desired a collaborative relationship with their administrators where administrators valued their input and expertise, but many were frustrated to discover they had little say in school initiatives and policies. When they *were* allowed to provide input, as in Jill's experience, this allowance seemed to be a formality or

curtesy rather than a true conversation to inform administrators' decisions and school changes. Administrators' lack of attention to their experiences strengthened sufferers' conviction they cared more about results than the costs to their employees of achieving those results. "I know they're busy, but it just sometimes feels like they don't care, that they don't want to deal with it," explained Diane, a first grade teacher. Sufferers were frustrated and hurt by administrators' dismissiveness of their concerns and experiences.

This passage also reveals sufferers' frustration at the attempted reduction of their work to a set of prescriptions. Education researchers have long observed the problems presented by such prescriptions in terms of definition, operationalization and evaluation (Woods, 1989). Like survivors, sufferers were frustrated administrators believed evaluation checklists and data reports could distinguish adequate from exemplary teaching. Sufferers did not believe their work was so easily broken down into forms and checklists, and they felt administrators' focus on these prescriptions limited their authentic interactions with students and teachers, thus hindering their ability to understand what was actually happening in classrooms.

Another frustration of all sufferers was how little classroom experience their administrators actually had in high poverty schools and elementary education.

None of [our administrators] were classroom teachers prior to becoming administrators. None of them have worked in schools like the school that we were working at, so they didn't truly understand what it was like to be in a classroom with twenty-five children that were struggling with the issues that our kids were struggling with. They didn't get it and you couldn't explain it to them. That was frustrating for me. (Victoria)

All of the administrators that we have at [school] right now have either never taught in a regular ed classroom or it's been 20 *years* since they've been in one. Our principal spent

15 years as a [technology coordinator] before she became an A.P. Before that, she taught

middle school… she has no *idea* what we do day in and day out. (Tiffany)

As revealed in these passages, many sufferers believed their administrators lacked teaching

experience in a high poverty elementary school setting. They believed this lack of experience

resulted in a fundamental lack of understanding of teachers' work and exacerbated

administrators' unrealistic expectations. For example, as Tiffany explained, nearly all sufferers

were frustrated by what they viewed as administrators' unrealistic expectations for teacher

performance. No matter at what academic level students entered sufferers' classroom, at what

point in the school year they join the class (some students arrived only days before testing

began), whether they were unidentified special education students, had limited English language

skills or a challenging social situation outside of school, a teacher was expected to ensure they

demonstrated a particular amount growth by the end of the school year and passed the district's

standardized achievement test.

We're just supposed to be magic. I'm just *magically* supposed to get them all to school

every day. I'm supposed to magically be able to move their reading levels. Some kids get

stuck at a level for a *whole year*, and then they make huge progress for whatever reason,

but they aren't taking any of that into consideration. I'm just supposed to move them; I'm

supposed to get that data up. (Tiffany)

Sufferers' lack of control over these factors was a constant source of frustration for them. Those

who worked with the largest number of EBD and special education students on their grade level

were frustrated by the implication they were not teaching as effectively as their peers, who taught

a high number of gifted students, based on their students' quarterly test scores. All sufferers

believed their administrators' lack of classroom experience contributed to their uniform

performance expectations across different classes and their belief that adequate and exceptional teachers could be distinguished by student test scores.

Administrators' assumptions that successful policies and initiatives in high income schools would automatically succeed in high poverty schools also frustrated sufferers and contributed to their lack of respect for them. Victoria explained:

> [Our principal] came from a school that didn't have any of the same issues that [our school] has and she thought she had all the solutions . . . . She lacks any experience in Title I. She lacks experience with children in severe poverty. When you're teaching in a school where all the kids come to kindergarten knowing how to read and then you go to a school where some of them don't even know their name, a smart person who is on their game would say, "I need to change myself and some of my beliefs to make this a success" as opposed to "Well, it works at my other school so we're going to do it here." The teachers who had been there for years and years were like, "No, you need to just slow your role and get to know us and get to know the kids before you try and do all this, because if there were [magic] solutions to teaching children who live in severe poverty, we would already be doing them.

As revealed in the passage, sufferers found administrators' grasp at quick-fixes in the hopes they would bring about significant learning transformation naïve and misguided. Sufferers who tried to reason with administrators and gently nudge them in a direction to help them be "on their game" found themselves accused of being negative, non-team players or demonstrating a lack of faith in their students' ability to achieve. These accusations angered sufferers, who cared a great deal about their students and wanted them to be in a learning environment that maximized their opportunities for meaningful learning and high academic achievement. Sufferers interpreted

administrators' dismissiveness of the learned experience and expertise of the teachers in their school as misplaced arrogance that they had magic solutions to resolve the academic challenges of students of poverty. Wendy, the science specials teacher, described her initial meeting with her principal, who was full of big dreams for the school, but had no grasp on the support and time needed to achieve them:

> There's a place [for] optimism, but he has no experience doing any of these [initiatives], so he doesn't know what it takes to get it done. He has no idea, so his expectation for what he wants you to accomplish is coming from a place of not understanding what it takes to do it. When you tell him I need this and I need this to get it done, you're a "naysayer" or you're "not a team player." It's something negative, but you're trying to get it done. There's no negativity in it; it's just, I want to get this done, let's put something behind it so we can get it done. You can look forward and see this is going to fail miserably. I don't want to be a part of a program that stinks. I want to do it the right way and have it work.

As revealed in the passage, sufferers resented being accused of being negative or not supportive, team players by conveying concerns regarding school initiatives. That they wanted school initiatives to succeed and that was *why* they raised concerns did not seem to register with administrators, which enhanced sufferers' exasperation with them.

A final primary frustration of sufferers, visible throughout a number of the interview excerpts in this chapter, was the lack of support administrators provided them in their work. "It's just so overwhelming. In my interview I asked about teacher support, and they told me that I was going to be supported on so many levels, and I wasn't supported *at all*," said Jacqueline, the first year teacher.

It's like, "Here, do this. Here, do this. We're not going to train you," [or] "You have one day of training and you have to go do it." Our kids don't learn that way and the teachers don't learn that way, either. (Victoria)

Now they're cutting all the special ed, because they're thinking, "Oh! Well teachers can offer that kind of individualized support in the classroom." You're expecting me to meet one-on-one with the kid that's four years below, and I've got 28 other kids that I have to start—? It's just *insane*. (Patricia)

Sufferers were frustrated to find themselves confronted with new school initiatives they were expected to seamlessly incorporate into their classroom practices without adequate time or training to fully absorb them. They also found administrators expecting them to take on individual student resource work formerly provided by ESOL and special education teachers in addition to their regular classroom teaching responsibilities, due to reallocation of the school budget and funds. Additionally, sufferers found themselves blamed rather than supported in dealing with extreme student misbehavior. Camilla explained:

When you have to press the button [for an administrator] or you have to write up a student, it [reflects] badly on you. "You have poor management skills," like you don't know how to manage your class. When, in fact, "You need to get this kid out of my room before I kill him, because right now, I need time to cool off!" Or "I don't have the necessary tool or skill set to deal with this type of behavior." [But] administrators blame and belittle teachers for not being able to handle [those] situations.

It bothered all sufferers that administrators were often dismissive of behavioral issues with students or implied something was wrong with them for feeling overwhelmed as they tried to manage challenging situations involving student misbehavior. Interestingly, no sufferers

mentioned student misbehavior as a primary source of frustration in their work; they seemed to expect some student misbehavior as an inevitable part of their job. However, all sufferers *were* frustrated by the lack of support they received from administrators in dealing with extreme student misbehavior. Sufferers described situations in which they found students cutting themselves in the bathroom, sexually bullying other students or hitting, kicking and punching in the classroom. They felt they had no official support to deal with such situations, many of which they did not feel appropriately trained or qualified to handle.

Sufferers also did not believe administrators' supported them in challenging interactions with parents. This lack of support left many sufferers with the sense their administrators did not respect and trust them enough to back them before such parents, although they had never given them reason *not* to respect and trust them, from their perspective. This lack of support made some sufferers feel the encroachment of burnout. Patricia described her experience of being verbally attacked by a parent and student at the end of the school day and then later on Facebook:

> The administrators felt the need to investigate, because, "It's my word against their word." I was, like, "Fuck *no*, it's not! I have been working for you for 13 years, are you kidding me?!" I had it . . . not feeling respected and [being] questioned, that does me in . . . valuing what [an aggressive parent and student] have to say over me—it's hard. It broke my heart. I get that there's protocol and we have to take everyone's statement, but how dare you question what I said and what I say happened over a nine-year-old kid? That really pushed me into feeling completely burned out.

Nearly all sufferers believed administrators were more likely to try to appease angry parents rather than stand up for teachers, even when the teachers had clearly been mistreated. This hurt sufferers' feelings and angered them, and, in some cases, contributed to their feelings of burnout.

Sometimes, administrators were honest with sufferers about why they felt uncomfortable supporting the teacher in such situations, but their honestly rarely made sufferers feel better. Jacqueline explained:

> [The parent] was just so rude to me, she was so disrespectful and she would always go over my head to the principal. It always seemed like the principal was on her side. [Then] the principal pulled me aside one time and she told me, "I don't want to make it seem like I'm on her side, but I have to keep this parent in my back corner, because I know she is the type of parent to go complain to Central Office."

This passage reveals the frustration sufferers experienced when their administrators cared more about their own performance evaluation from district officials than helping the teachers in their school who were being bullied by parents. Mirroring sufferers' feelings regarding misbehaving students, sufferers' primary frustration in challenging situations with parents was not with the parents themselves, but rather with administrators for not defending and supporting them so the parents understood such bullying behavior was not tolerated at their school. They felt powerless and frustrated trying to deal with some of the aggressive behavior of parents by themselves.

Working with colleagues. Similar to survivors' experiences of work, colleagues were also an occasional source of frustration to sufferers. In particular, sufferers were frustrated when colleagues displayed a lack of support for others in their work. Mirroring survivors' frustration with instructional coaches, a number of sufferers were frustrated when instructional coaches harassed them about administrative responsibilities rather than providing instructional support to students in their classroom. All sufferers felt strapped for time in their work, and they resented when instructional coaches created what they viewed as extra work for classroom teachers to complete. Also, like survivors, sufferers felt some instructional coaches lacked the competence

and experience to assist them with teaching the students in their classroom. They had little respect for these colleagues.

A subset of sufferers was also frustrated by their colleagues' unwillingness to stand up to administrators' unrealistic expectations and demands:

It's like this culture of a bunch of codependents running around trying to save the world. It's like, "That's enough! You have to stand up. You *have* to take a stand. You have to set boundaries, and you need to be taken seriously." For some reason, I feel like teachers just get run over, and they expect to be run over; they have a sick, twisted enjoyment in getting run over. I'm one of the few teachers in the school that will actually take a stand on things and not worry about what heat I might get. (Patricia)

I think [teachers] might be afraid of their job, their position; they're afraid of what their co-workers might think; they're afraid of being the one to always stand out and be different. [But] in order for change to happen somebody has *got* to stand up for what is right. (Camilla)

As revealed in these excerpts, some sufferers believed teachers should stand up to school policies and procedures that conflicted with what they believed was in the best interest of their students and the school community. These sufferers' desire to engage in candid conversations with administrators differentiated them from survivors and the other sufferers in this study, who believed little good would come of such conversations. I will explore the majority of sufferers' reasons for not wanting to speak openly with administrators in the section on sufferers' worries and fears later in this chapter.

Finally, over half of sufferers also expressed frustration when colleagues did not pursue the special education qualification process for struggling students. Diane explained:

So many teachers choose not to do it, because they know nothing is going to happen with
it. It takes *forever*. [Teachers] can go through a whole year [of collecting data], and they
can't use the data from the year before, they have to start all over. So by the time they get
services for these kids, it's almost like it's too late. It's just insane.… [But] at least make
the effort. Even if you *know* it's not going to happen, make the effort. At least there's a
paper trail… so many of [the students] need so much help.

The special education qualification process was acknowledged by nearly all sufferers to be an
arduous, inefficient, time-consuming and intensely frustrating process. However, *not* engaging in
it prevented struggling students from qualifying for special services, which amounted to failing
to fulfill an important support role for students, from the perspective of these sufferers.

Sadness

A dominant emotion experienced by sufferers in their work that distinguished them from
their thriver and survivor colleagues was sadness. For many veteran sufferers, experiences of
sadness occurred when they reflected on what they viewed as better work times in the past. The
loss of in-school confidants, many of whom retired from the profession or moved on to different
schools, was particularly hard on them. Victoria explained:

[Work] changed a lot, because every year we had fifteen to twenty-five people who
would leave and these new people would come in. I was trying to build a friendship with
them, but it wasn't like the people who had left. In the last, probably, four years, the
network of support that I had there was really dwindling. I'm still friends with many of
the people outside of school, but they weren't there for me at work.

As revealed in the passage, in-school confidants with whom sufferers shared a close bond were
not easily replaced when they left the school. Many sufferers remained friends with their former

confidants outside of school, but the benefit of their support was not the same as when they worked together on a daily basis. For these sufferers, it felt like they lost their formerly strong in-school support network. For all of these sufferers, a sense of loss was central to their work identity.

Sufferers also experienced sadness as a result of administrators' depersonalization of the school community, which made many feel unappreciated and replaceable. Tiffany explained:

> I feel like [administrators] have lost their focus on the human aspect [of our work]. They've forgotten . . . we're not *in* a business. It's a service. It's a *human* service. They've lost their humanity . . . . They are not giving me, as a teacher, any indication that they care about me. Or they don't even care that I *stay* in teaching . . . . I think if I just didn't go back, they'd deal with it. They'd get somebody to replace me. I'm replaceable. That's how I feel. And yet I know that I'm *not*, because I know there's a teacher shortage looming on the horizon for them, but they're not seeing that. I just have an overwhelming sense that I don't matter, ultimately. It's very sad.

Many sufferers were hurt by administrators' view of them as interchangeable and replaceable. They felt used and undervalued when administrators dismissed or took little notice of their individual, positive contributions to the school.

A source of sadness for sufferers who worked as support teachers was not feeling trusted by their classroom colleagues. Administrators sometimes pressured coaches and support teachers to play an informant role and report back information on their colleagues. Classroom teachers, knowing this, were at times especially suspicious and distrustful of support teachers, making support work isolating. Victoria explained:

I was kind of in between. I wasn't quite a classroom teacher and I wasn't admin., I was somewhere in between. That was people's perception. I think people were a little more guarded, people who didn't know me . . . . There were certainly people who thought I was spying . . . . The people I had worked with for years and years were like, "Victoria, what are you going to tell admin. about my classroom?!" I'm like, "What are you talking about? I'm going to tell them that you're awesome and that I've learned so much from you and that I love coming in your room." To me, I was the same as the classroom teacher. I was on the same level. I had the same expectations. I was trying to do the exact same thing, which was to help those kids to show gains. That idea that coaches are spies was already in everybody's mind and there was really nothing I could do to persuade some people that it wasn't that way.

As revealed in the passage, support teachers found it challenging to convince some of their colleagues they were not administrator informants, although all of them refused to play an informant role for their administrators. Support teachers understood classroom teachers' distrust of them, but they were saddened by the needlessly distant relationships this distrust produced.

Worries and Fear

Similar to thrivers and survivors, nearly all sufferers found themselves worrying about their students' health and well-being outside of school. Karen, a support teacher, explained:

Those kids that are in eighth grade now, they haven't been with me for five years, they are a part of who I am as a teacher. They are a part of who I am as a person, just because they are not in your classroom, they don't go away . . . . I didn't think I'd carry kids around with me as much as I do, in my head, in my heart . . . . The hard stories will keep you up at night. The kids who have been sexually abused by a family member . . . the

> kids who come to school with marks on their face. What some of these children go
>
> through from the time they are born until the time they are six is more than I'm going to
>
> deal with in my entire lifetime.

Like thrivers and survivors, caring about students did not switch off at the end of the workday or school year for sufferers. As revealed in the passage, some sufferers believed they carried their relationships with students with them outside of work because their students had become part of them. Like survivors, sufferers accepted their concerns about students as an inevitable part of their work. Although they recognized there were bounds to their ability to safeguard their students, they remained vigilant about doing what they could to protect them and keep them safe.

Another fear of many sufferers was becoming a target of administrator retribution, or finding oneself on what they referred to as the principal's "bad list," and fear of administrator retribution served as an effective means of controlling sufferers' behavior. Often invisible to the outside observer, sufferers were keenly aware that administrators made the work lives of targeted teachers substantively harder. Targeted teachers received the largest portion of the toughest students on the grade level, often known for recurrent misbehavior or low academic records. These teachers also found themselves switched to different grade levels each school year, often grade levels they had little experience with or interest in teaching. Targeted teachers had the most inconvenient daily schedules, were last to receive school resources and were party to a high number of "got you" moments—unannounced administrator visits in hopes of catching a teacher violating administrators' expectations or school policies. They also received suspiciously low evaluation scores and were the recipients of comments designed to belittle and embarrass them in front of others. Many sufferers believed their administrators targeted and bullied these colleagues as an invisible way of expediting their departure from the school. Observing administrators'

treatment of targeted colleagues intensified sufferers' feelings of disrespect for their administrators.

Few sufferers actually considered themselves targets of administrator retribution at the time of our interview. However, all but one sufferer had observed colleagues targeted and bullied by administrators, and they were loath to experience it themselves. While sometimes it was obvious to sufferers how particular teachers ended up a target of administrator retribution, sometimes administrator bullying defied sufferers' understanding. The arbitrary, fickle nature of administrators' targeting of teachers unnerved sufferers and rendered administrator retribution a constant source of anxiety for many of them.

Colleagues' unsuccessful attempts at reporting administrator mistreatment made their way back to the school where sufferers saw the very real consequences of such actions for those colleagues. The resulting treatment of these teachers deterred most sufferers from reporting their misgivings to the district office. Believing there to be no fair recourse for injustices in their workplace exacerbated sufferers' feelings of powerlessness, helplessness and anxiety at work. "Their fear tactics are working on me, because I do still need to pay my rent and eat, so I don't really want them to fire me," explained Tiffany.

Entire grade levels of teachers were also sometimes the target of administrator retribution. A number of sufferers experienced the division of their grade level, a team they found to be strong and effective, because they believed the principal viewed the team as threatening. Jill explained:

> If you are a boss and you want to keep everyone uneven, you don't want alliances to
>
> form, then you just bust up those kind of friendships. I do think that's one reason [the
>
> principal] broke up second grade and put almost everybody on different grade levels. We

were not afraid to speak up . . . I've talked to my sister a lot about this, because she's only

ever been in business. She said, "That's a business strategy. If you're a boss, you don't

want your underlings to bond and stage a coup."

The belief that strong teams of teachers were a threat rather than asset to the school community

worried sufferers and clashed with their beliefs about their work. Such divisions enhanced

sufferers' feelings of distrust and disrespect for their administrators, who seemed more interested

in demonstrating and maintaining control than in encouraging the formation of strong teams of

teachers. Sufferers tried to reach out to their new grade level colleagues and forge relationships

with those individuals, but they found themselves wondering when the rug would be ripped out

from beneath them again, casting their new in-school support network into upheaval.

Echoing a frustration discussed earlier in this chapter, some sufferers worried their

colleagues' lack of open communication with administrators perpetuated conditions that

exacerbated their negative emotional experiences of work. There was strong collegial pressure to

avoid speaking openly with administrators, as Marquise explained:

[There] was that whole assumption that anything that happens within a grade level just

stays in there. It was almost like a mini fight club or a gang initiation type, "Whatever

you say stays in here. You don't do anything else." Being a new teacher, especially, you

don't think you have any choice, because you didn't know . . . . It's almost like you're

coming to a place, and you're coming in under the idea that you have to just roll with the

punches and roll with how people are doing it there. You have mentors that tell you to

keep your mouth quiet and just nod your head at meetings like everything is okay. This is

what I was told: "When the administration talks, just nod your head like you're doing

everything, and everything is all right, so that you don't bring any stress on you when you're already stressed out."

As revealed in the passage, colleagues played a powerful role in silencing teachers new to the school who desired a more open, communicative relationship with administrators. These veteran colleagues put pressure on newer teachers to act in certain ways to avoid exposing the entire grade level to administrator retribution. Crossing these colleagues was a scary proposition, because one risked losing their goodwill and support. Sufferers' respect for their colleagues wishes and fear of "rocking the boat" effectively silenced them, but this silence did nothing to change the conditions contributing to their negative work emotions.

Unlike thrivers and survivors, evaluations were also source of anxiety for many sufferers. Since evaluation visits were frequently unannounced and could occur at any time during the school day, many sufferers spent much of the year in a state of anxiety over administrators' arrival for an official evaluation. Tiffany explained:

There's this fear, when they show up, everybody's in the hallways talking, "Did you get a visitor today?!" "I saw them walking around with their clipboards, did you get—?!" Everybody's *terrified* of getting "needs development" or "inefficient." . . . . I feel that I'm constantly on edge.

As revealed in the passage, other teachers' anxiety often heightened sufferers' own. Teachers frantically warned each other when they saw administrators roaming the halls with their iPad's in hand to conduct evaluations. The fickleness of administrators' favoritism heightened many sufferers' feelings of anxiety and vulnerability regarding evaluations. The unpredictability of most students' behavior and even more unsettling, the predictable misbehavior of certain students, coupled with the ever changing list of "requirements" for teachers in their work

enhanced the vulnerability sufferers experienced on hearing administrators were circulating to evaluate them. Even sufferers who had never received negative evaluations found themselves experiencing anxiety and self-doubt when an administrator walked into their room to evaluate them. Sally explained:

> Quite frankly, you're like, "Oh shit, am I doing what I'm supposed to be doing?" . . . I find myself questioning, "Am I doing this the correct way?" even though I wouldn't question it otherwise. But you feel like *they're* questioning it. You question yourself, and then your confidence is gone at the end of the lesson and you're waiting for that feedback on the computer of what they're going to say about it. A lot of times I feel like it could go either way. Did I do what I was supposed to do? Did I cover everything that was on my lesson plan? It's definitely nerve-racking.

Sufferers knew they could be judged on anything that occurred in their classroom in a given minute, and, as a number of them explained to me, meeting all of the expectations was impossible; a number of the expectations even contradicted each other.

Mirroring a frustration of sufferers, the lack of support from administrators with challenging and disruptive students caused some sufferers anxiety for their own safety and the safety of the other students in their classroom. "I'm concerned [by the] record number of teachers who are being assaulted by students," confessed Karen. Peggy, a kindergarten teacher, worried about a student prone to violent episodes in which he bit, hit, kicked, threw furniture and spit at others in his vicinity. The lack of administrator support in dealing with such students made sufferers anxious about their ability to manage the disruptive behavior in the best way for all involved.

Sufferers also felt anxious interacting with angry parents of students in their class. This fear was particularly strong for sufferers who had experienced an aggressive, bullying parent in the past. Diane explained:

I had a parent last year who was accusing me of being a racist, of holding her child back. All this stuff. You've got that occasional parent. I think after that my defenses are up, like, "Oh my gosh. I'm going to get attacked." Any time I get a note or an email that asks me to call a parent, I always automatically feel like, (gasp) "They're going to attack me," which, I shouldn't have to feel like that.

Given the lack of support sufferers could count on from administrators, many sufferers felt powerless in situations in which parents mistreated them. Following such an experience, there was a constant fear in the minds of these sufferers that they would find themselves bullied or attacked when interacting with parents in the future. The stress of dealing with student and parent misbehavior was compounded by the stress of the many other responsibilities of the teacher. When already feeling emotionally stretched and overwhelmed by the amount of work for which they were responsible, sufferers worried they had little emotional bandwidth to deal with such situations by themselves.

The personal cost of the work was another worry expressed by many sufferers. Patricia explained:

My daughter is eight now and it's like, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Now she's on this teacher kick and I'm like, "It's an impactful job. You'll feel like you make a difference, but at what expense to *you*?" . . . no matter how much I fight for myself to maintain health, and clarity, and balance, and peace, it is a losing battle. It

really is so hard . . . I come at a great expense to it. My family comes to a great expense

for the work that I do.

Nearly all sufferers worried about the psychological and physical costs of working in a high

poverty elementary school. Despite trying to maintain a work-life balance, sufferers worried this

was "a losing battle." Many sufferers' also feared they were so emotionally drained at the end of

the day that they were not able to give enough of themselves to close family and friends. This

fear was often tinged with guilt and sadness. "My family gets the worst of me a lot of days. They

get the out-of-patience me," Peggy tearfully acknowledged. "I feel like imbalance is something

that I struggle with . . . that my life is out of balance, because my work comes before my family."

These sufferers felt other important roles in their lives, such as mother, friend and caregiver,

were subsumed by their role as teacher.

Finally, many sufferers worried about the effects of the high pressure placed on students

to grow at a specific rate and achieve particular academic standards by the end of each school

year. Victoria explained the fear of administrators' uniform expectations for students regardless

of their backgrounds or current knowledge and skills:

Having a graded system where all second graders need to be able to do this—that's not

how children learn . . . . Sometimes those ideas about how you learn get set in those early

years. If you struggle in kindergarten because you're not reading on a level D, you go to

first grade and it's hard for you, you might always think school is hard for you, even

though you just needed to catch up in third or fourth grade . . . . We are messing up the

kids and we're setting them up for failure. Not everybody learns at the same rate and that

is *okay*.

The inflexible, high stakes approach to teaching and learning in their school clashed with sufferers' lived experience of learning as an unpredictable, messy process. Students' beliefs about themselves as learners mattered to sufferers, and they were concerned that regimented expectations for student growth and performance made students vulnerable to developing negative understandings of themselves as learners.

Regrets

When asked if they would choose to teach again, all sufferers said no or expressed uncertainty about the wisdom of their career choice. Nearly half of sufferers were no longer happy teaching, but expressed doubts about what else they could do. Tiffany explained:

Right now, I feel like I'm stuck in this career, because I've taught for 20 years, I have a master's degree in it. I really don't know what else to do. People tell me all the time, "Well, your skills are so marketable!" but I know how to manage classrooms of *children*. I really don't want to manage classrooms of *adults*. I don't know what skills are transferable, so I just kind of feel like I'm stuck . . . . The son of a friend has been thinking about going into teaching, and I asked him, "*Why*? Why do you want to be a teacher?" I [used to] be honest with [pre-service teachers] and tell them that it's a lot of work for not very much money and it's going to be stressful, but I wouldn't encourage them to go look for something else. I would do that now. I would encourage young people to really think twice about going into the profession.

As revealed in the passage, many sufferers felt they could not recommend their work to another, because it was too hard to actually enact their pedagogical beliefs and they felt the work came at too high a personal cost. In contrast to Nias's (1989) study of English primary school teachers, all sufferers strongly identified with being a teacher. This self-understanding complicated their

internal debate about whether they would choose teaching again as a career. It also complicated their decision about whether to remain in or leave their workplace and/or the profession. Sufferers' reluctance to leave to profession may have had something to do with the belief that teaching was central to who they were. Jill said:

> I really had no plans to retire, but I just felt like I couldn't last another year with the way things were . . . . [but] I think that being a teacher, you're like, "This is what I have to do because this is who I am," more than other professions. There's still a part of you, even if you leave the profession, you're always still a teacher. That's just how you see things and how you feel about kids.

Many sufferers described wanting to be a teacher since they were small children. Most also felt highly committed to teaching in high poverty schools, where they believed students most needed them and they could make the greatest difference in students' lives. However, a large number of sufferers also expressed regret at the personal cost to them and to their families of their work, and they did not feel they could sustain in their current high poverty school much longer. All sufferers had considered leaving their school at the end of the school year, and many were taking direct steps to do so by researching other employment opportunities.

Joy and Pride

Sufferers also experienced joy and pride in their work. These emotions often intertwined in sufferers' work lives and closely mirrored the positive emotional work experiences of thrivers and survivors.

Working with students. Many sufferers' greatest work experiences of joy and pride came from their interactions with students. They enjoyed watching moments when a concept clicked for students. They found these moments of student success were particularly gratifying

when they followed a period of challenge and struggle on the part of the student. "[I love] the lightbulb moments when you see the growth, you see kids who have been struggling, and then they *get* it," explained Anna. Watching students make connections and build on their existing knowledge brought sufferers joy, and they were proud to play a positive role in their students' learning. Seeing student enthusiasm following these learning successes also brought sufferers joy and pride. Sally explained:

> It makes me so happy when they are really getting something. When they've mastered those sight words, or they move up a reading level. You can just see their expressions, you know that they're excited about it, you're excited about it. That just makes it worthwhile. That's something I'm very proud of.

Like thrivers and survivors, it brought sufferers great pleasure and pride to watch students' confidence in themselves as learners grow as they experienced academic success and to know that they played a role in facilitating that success. Again, for a number of sufferers, such moments were particularly rewarding when they occurred with struggling students. Grace, a second grade teacher, explained:

> I serve quite a few special ed students. Some are on my homeroom roster and then I also have a lot of push-in from other classes and co-teachers and support teachers. And there's this one student who is very challenging behaviorally and defiant. When I am able to connect with him, I feel victorious. It's the best feeling . . . I'm generally a pretty patient person, but I just feel especially patient with this one child. When he comes in here and he's able to be positive and engaged and excited about learning and *not* a behavior problem that he's known to be throughout the school—it feels great. It's gratifying.

As revealed in the passage, sufferers were happy and proud to successfully engage the attention and positive behavior of students who were known to challenge other teachers in the school. Inspiring positive changes in these students' behavior and classroom engagement made sufferers feel they were accomplishing meaningful work.

Seeing student growth over the school year was also a source of positive emotions for sufferers. Peggy explained:

I [love] the growth that they show from the beginning to the end of the year. It's always funny, because every year you start back over and you're like, "Ah! How am I going to get them there?" But every year it's the same thing. In May you're like, "Wow, I started with them in August and look at how far they've come!"

As revealed in the passage, watching their students make progress over the academic year made sufferers happy and proud, because this progress validated their goal of positively impacting the lives of their students and made them feel successful in their work.

Relationships with students were another great source of joy and pride for nearly all sufferers. Like thrivers and survivors, sufferers believed establishing strong, caring relationships with students benefited their work together in the classroom. Jacqueline explained:

Forming those relationships is key so they know that I love them, I care about them [and] I don't want anything more than for them to succeed. Then they try more and they know not to act up when they are not supposed to. Building the classroom environment so that [they know], "We are all a team, we are all a family," I love [that].

Similar to thrivers and survivors, it was important to sufferers that their students know they respected them as individuals and cared about them beyond their academic achievement in the

classroom. Like Jacqueline, many sufferers attempted to establish a warm, welcoming classroom environment so students felt safe and encouraged to take risks in their learning.

Sustaining relationships with students over time also brought sufferers joy. Knowing they personally connected with students and that their students wanted to remain in contact with them after the end of the school year was gratifying to sufferers. Sally explained:

Having those students come up to you from last year, you feel like a celebrity walking to the lunch room, because 3rd grade is in there and they're like, "Hey! Mrs. Akins!" You know that they did love you.

As revealed in the passage, sufferers enjoyed former students' enthusiasm when they encountered each other at school. These interactions made sufferers feel they had successfully established a positive connect with their students, and they were happy and proud to know students still cared to maintain a relationship with them. Verbal and written expressions of appreciation from former students were additional sources of joy and pride for many sufferers. Alice explained:

I have one child, she's in middle school now, but she still leaves me messages on my website's blog . . . . I feel like they still do remember you and they value what you did that made a difference.

As revealed in the passage, it was highly meaningful to sufferers to be remembered by their former students. These messages helped them recognize students' valued their hard work and they felt happy and proud to know they positively impacted their students' lives. Again, it made sufferers feel good to believe they had successfully accomplished meaningful work.

Learning of the successes of former students was also a source of positive emotions for sufferers. Karen explained:

[Some of my students] have gotten into the best high schools we have here. It's great to think that you are a part of that. If you've had a student for two or three years, you like to think that you had something to do with that. How much, I don't know; it doesn't really matter. I am just thrilled.

Like thrivers and survivors, the successes of former students validated sufferers' goal of positively impacting students' lives. Knowing they played a role in this success was highly gratifying.

Also similar to thrivers and survivors, teaching in a way consistent with what they believed best for children brought sufferers joy. Jill explained:

When you close your door and you're with the kids [and] you just kind of go rebel on everybody and do what you think you should be doing, that's the most satisfying [part of my work].

As revealed in the passage, sufferers enjoyed going "rebel" and teaching in a way consistent with their pedagogical beliefs, but they rarely did this for reasons discussed in the worries and fear section of this chapter.

Like thrivers, sufferers were proud of their hard work advocating for and supporting their students. "Knowing that this is the best I can give to each child, and that I have done everything that I could, I'm proud of that," said Alice. Many sufferers were happy and proud when they successfully procured special education support for struggling students in their classroom. Patricia explained:

I have a real sense of pride about getting kids referred, because it is such an uphill battle and most teachers are scared of it. It's hard. When I finally get a kid referred, I literally get up and I physically dance around the room. I high-five the parent, "See?! (cheering)."

It's a very exciting thing, because it's so hard to do. It takes so much effort. That, to me, is saying, "I am advocating. No matter what anybody pushes against me, I *will* advocate for your child. I will advocate until I'm blue in the face and everyone hates me." If a kid needs something, I'm there. I will refer that kid.

As revealed in the passage, being a strong advocate for their students was important to sufferers. Helping students qualify for special education services was particularly rewarding, because as described in the section on sufferers' frustrations, the qualification process was often long and demanded a great deal of time and effort on the part of the teacher. Successfully making it through the process made sufferers feel good, because they felt their hard work and advocacy paid off and they positively impacted their students' lives.

Working with parents. Like survivors, many sufferers considered building strong relationships with the parents of their students among their greatest sources of work pleasure and pride:

I've taught a lot of siblings from the same family and that's amazing. When a younger student is on my list at the beginning of the year, I get to hug that parent . . . that brings me the most joy, the relationship piece with the students and the families. (Grace)

The number one thing that stands out in my mind at the end of every year when I'm finished teaching is the strength of the relationships I have built with my parents. I have parents calling me and asking me for ideas on how to help their child months and years later. Their child is no longer in my class, but they're still communicating with me. That, to me, is impressive. I find that very humbling . . . . You never know how far your impact will extend. (Camilla)

Developing close relationships with their students' families and maintaining these relationships over time made sufferers feel they successfully cared for their students and could continue playing a positive role in their lives. Staying in touch with parents and seeing the joy parents derived from maintaining a strong relationship with them made the sufferers feel trusted and respected.

When parents expressed appreciation for their work, sufferers felt particularly happy and proud. Diane described one such experience with a parent:

> The mom was very thankful, and she would hug me, and tell me how much she appreciated me. That makes it all worth it. If you have one parent who just says, "Thank you. I know you're trying your hardest [and] doing your best."

Sufferers found parents' expressions of appreciation gratifying. "It just brightens my day; it gives you a boost of confidence," explained Jacqueline. This positive feedback helped sufferers believe they were accomplishing meaningful work. However, given sufferers' emotional experience of work was overwhelmingly negative, it appears the positive feedback they received from parents and students was not enough to counterbalance the negative feedback from administrators that what they were doing fell short of expectations.

Working with colleagues. Like-minded colleagues were also a source of joy for sufferers. Patricia explained the joy of learning from and collaborating with colleagues she trusted and respected:

> I love collaborating with colleagues, the ones who are willing to do it. I think that's gratifying, not just to teacher train, but to work as a team and bounce ideas off of each other. It is a form of intimacy. Our craft is so [isolating] that when you're able to share that intimacy with someone else and learn from each other, it's extremely gratifying.

As revealed in the passage, brainstorming ideas and authentically collaborating with colleagues was a joyous experience for sufferers, and like thrivers and survivors, sufferers found such collaboration benefited them in their work. Successfully collaborating with colleagues to help students master new knowledge and skills made sufferers feel trusted, respected, appreciated and successful in their work.

What is perhaps most interesting about sufferers' experiences of joy and pride is how similar they were to those of thrivers and survivors. These findings suggest not all elements of one's work carry the same emotional weight, and some positive experiences at work may not counterbalance a large number of negative ones. There is evidence from the field of psychology that negative events and feedback are more salient for humans than positive ones (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer & Vohs, 2001). This research suggests five positive events are needed to overcome the psychological effects of one negative event. It is possible this ratio explains why sufferers' overall emotional experience of their work was overwhelmingly negative, despite positive interactions with students, parents and colleagues that brought them joy and pride. It is possible this ratio simply never balanced in sufferers' favor in the face of a steady stream of negative feedback from their administrators.

In the next section, I turn to how sufferers coped with their negative work emotions to better understand their emotional work lives and further explore how their emotional lives differed from those of thrivers and survivors.

Coping

Six dominant coping strategies characterized how sufferers negotiated their work emotions: *play the game, ruminate on one's negative work emotions, accentuate the positive, reach out to one's social support network, take a break,* and *bide one's time.* Unlike the coping

strategies of thrivers and survivors, none of sufferers' coping strategies provided extended relief

from their negative work emotions. When asked how they coped with their work, nearly all

sufferers' responses varied from "barely" to "not well." Some of the coping strategies of

sufferers temporarily minimized their negative work emotions, but as we will see, some of their

coping strategies actually exacerbated their negative work emotions.

Play the Game

Like survivors, a coping strategy sometimes employed by sufferers was to *play the game*.

This form of surface acting (Hochschild, 1983) allowed sufferers to separate themselves from the

work role they played. Grace explained:

> Sometimes when I'm just *really* frustrated, I've just got to put on a show, even when I'm
>
> not feeling it. You just have to keep going and get done what you have planned to get
>
> done that day. I just keep pushing on, even when I'm gasping for air.

Playing the game helped a number of sufferers navigate frustrations and fears provoked by their

administrators as they interacted with students in their classroom. They found their work

frustrations and concerns sometimes receded as they focused on being a positive, upbeat teacher

for their students in a given moment; they felt good about themselves when they were able to

mask their negative work emotions.

Sufferers also played the game to manage their negative work emotions when interacting

with administrators, but this strategy rarely provided sufferers the same relief it provided their

survivor colleagues. When they were being observed by administrators for their annual

evaluations, they described engaging in a "dog and pony show" to receive acceptable evaluations

and remain on administrators' good side, but nearly all sufferers resented having to act happy

and carefree when frustration, anxiety and exhaustion churned below the surface of their

performance. Some sufferers found their inner frustration and anger at administrators actually intensified as they assumed the role of upbeat, non-threatening team player. As mentioned in the previous chapter on survivors, another drawback of playing the game is this strategy never altered the source of sufferers' negative work emotions, thus perpetuating the circumstances that produced these negative feelings.

Ruminate on Negative Work Emotions

Playing the game sometimes led to a second dominant coping strategy of sufferers: *ruminating on one's negative work emotions*. This is the first coping strategy to emerge in this study that had a fully negative impact on teachers' emotional state. This strategy distinguished sufferers from thrivers and survivors, who actively avoided negative rumination about their work emotions. Frequently, sufferers found themselves unconsciously engaged in this strategy. Once they became conscious of their rumination about work frustrations and concerns, many sufferers struggled to shut off this negative chatter in their minds and the associated negative feelings. "I think [about work] all the time, it doesn't stop. It never stops," said Peggy. As a result, for many sufferers, negative work emotions seemed like a constant part of their lives from which they struggled to escape.

Sufferers commonly ruminated about differences between their workplace now, the way it was in the past and their beliefs about how it should be:

> I've seen a lot of changes, and it's hard to think back, like, "Oh I remember when we didn't have to do this—," or "Remember how it used to be?" [That] makes it hard. (Grace)

> I don't think [our work] needs to be that way . . . I think it can be different, I do. I really think it can be different, but it's getting worse. It's getting worse, for sure. (Patricia)

As revealed in these passages, reflecting on negative changes to their work heightened sufferers' negative emotional experiences. Many sufferers ruminated on the unnecessary challenges and stressors in their work. All sufferers believed that their work was overly demanding and that working conditions could be improved such that the demands did not come at such a high personal cost. Fixating on this belief distinguished them from the other teachers in this study. As revealed in the second passage, Patricia's reflection that her work was needlessly difficult led her to ruminate that "it's getting worse," enhancing her frustration with her work. This rumination pattern of spiraling negative emotion was common among sufferers and may partially explain sufferers' more negative emotional experience of work than thrivers and survivors. Ruminating on negative work emotions often deepened those emotions for sufferers.

A number of veteran sufferers acknowledged there had always been aspects of their work that produced frustrations and concerns, but they felt in the past they had been able to get away from their negative emotions by shutting their classroom door and teaching in a way they believed was best for their students. Tiffany explained:

> It's that other stuff that seeps through. You used to be able to just shut your door, and there'd be crap out there, but you could shut your door and [ignore] it. But now it feels like it's coming into the classroom more and more.

As revealed in the passage, these veteran sufferers believed they were no longer able to ignore their frustrations and concerns in ways that had been possible in the past. The classroom no longer felt like a safe haven away from their negative work emotions. Ruminating on this belief intensified their work frustrations and worries.

Research from the field of neuropsychology indicates humans process positive and negative emotions in different hemispheres of the brain (Nass & Yen, 2010). This research

indicates making sense of negative emotions typically involves a longer, more thorough process than making sense of positive emotions. In other words, it is human nature to ruminate more about negative emotional experiences than positive ones. In light of this research, it is possible sufferers' negative rumination was an automatic human reaction to the high number of negative emotional experiences they encountered in their work.

Accentuate the Positive

In contrast to the above coping strategy, similar to thrivers and survivors, many sufferers tried to accentuate the positive in their work. For a couple of reasons, this strategy provided little relief for many sufferers. The majority of sufferers felt they were being disingenuous about their overall work circumstances when they tried to accentuate positive elements of their work. What was the point of misleading oneself and pretending work life was other than what it was? Such thoughts often led these sufferers to reflect critically on their work circumstances, which perpetuated the negative cycle of rumination discussed above. Grace explained attempting to look positively at unfortunate situations in her work:

> Sometimes when extra things are dumped on my plate and I get frustrated at first, I just take a step back and decide to be grateful for it, because it means they trust me and they respect my work. So even when I'm stressed out, I try to be thankful (chuckle), and take it as a positive.

As revealed in the passage, some sufferers attempted to convince themselves they were trusted and respected, for example, when they received extra tasks from administrators. But given so many of administrators' actions contradicted such trust and respect, Grace and her fellow sufferers found it difficult to embrace this positive outlook. Extra work just seemed like a

burden, and this work exacerbated their feeling of being overwhelmed. Sufferers rarely actually

felt appreciated and valued by their administrators when given extra work responsibilities.

Several sufferers kept a file or jar of positive letters and notes from students, parents and

administrators to help them accentuate the positive in their work. Camilla, for example,

described the "smile file" she kept in her classroom:

> Every single time I have a child or an administrator or parent write me something nice, I
>
> put it in my smile file . . . . Then when I'm having a really bad day, I just pull out a note
>
> and I read it to encourage me so I can keep moving and I don't have to cry or put my
>
> head on my desk and take a nap because I'm so disgruntled with everything going on
>
> around me.

As revealed in the passage, many sufferers consulted positive messages from others on

particularly challenging days at work. However, this strategy of diving into positive memories

had the opposite effect intended for many of them. Although most sufferers felt a genuine pulse

of positive emotion as they reread such letters from students, administrators and parents, this

positive emotion was often immediately followed by a stronger, negative emotion: sadness.

Remembering good times and feeling appreciated when able to teach the way one wanted

automatically made sufferers reflect on how much their work had changed. Such positive

memories led sufferers to reflect on how unhappy they currently felt in their work. This

reflection brought on a rush of negative feelings, and brought them back, inadvertently, to

ruminating on their negative work emotions.

What did appear to genuinely help several sufferers accentuate the positive in their work

was to maintain a sense of perspective about it. Previous challenging work experience helped

these sufferers maintain perspective and provided a genuine feeling of gratitude for their current

work. Will, for example, was in the army prior to teaching and felt grateful he was now able to perform non-life threatening work. He was thankful for his health and every morning repeated the mantra: "I feel happy, healthy and terrific," which helped him start each school day on a positive note. However, many sufferers did not have life-threatening prior work experience to provide such perspective. And since a number of sufferers currently experienced health problems, they could not wake up each morning and honestly tell themselves they felt "happy, healthy and terrific," because this simply was not true.

Similar to thrivers and survivors, a subset of sufferers also relied on prayer as a coping strategy to maintain a sense of positivity in their work. Sufferers drew on this strategy as a daily ritual to prepare them for their workday:

> I definitely pray every day. That's something that I do every morning on my drive here. I pray for patience, I pray for understanding, I pray some days just to get through the day, just to make it through. (Sally)
>
> I know, that God is by my side, and he's always with me. I don't have to worry about the unknown, because he's already there and I'm just going to move forward in faith and trust that he knows what he's doing, because I don't most of the time. God gives [me] strength and confidence. (Camilla)

Like a small group of thrivers and survivors, these sufferers took comfort in believing God had a plan for their work lives and the lives of their students. Their faith allowed their negative emotions to recede and helped them embrace the belief that everything was going to be okay. Particularly when feeling at the end of their emotional rope, these sufferers took comfort in knowing a higher power was looking out for them and would provide them with positive attributes such as strength, patience and courage.

Reach Out to Social Support Network

Like thrivers and survivors, sufferers found colleagues to be a great emotional resource in their work. Sharing their emotional experiences of work with trusted confidants made sufferers feel less alone. As mentioned previously in this chapter, although a large number of sufferers had at one time enjoyed a robust in-school support network, many now felt that network had diminished:

> [Sharing with trusted colleagues] makes me feel like I'm not alone, like maybe I'm not crazy . . . [but] when I came here, everybody already had their own little cliques, and it's hard to fit in. I still feel like I don't really have any true friends there. I talk to people, but I don't hang out with anybody after work like I did [at my former school]. I'm still trying to figure out how to fit in. (Diane)

> When it comes to colleagues supporting me, it's mainly just like therapy. You go to them, and you go, "This happened to me. What do you think about it?" or "Am I *crazy* or is this going on?" And you realize you're not crazy, it is really happening. Also, we support each other with lesson plan ideas and just the day to day stresses of working in a Title I school with a lot of poor students. It's really using your colleagues as therapists, cheap therapy (laughter), and also [for] professional learning ideas… And also your personal life. Sometimes you try not to bring it to school, but things happen in your personal life and they're your friends. So you can go out after school and talk. You have friends who support you no matter what . . . . That's so different now, because [my friends] have all moved on. They've retired or they've moved on to another school or a different school district. (Tiffany)

A large distinction between many sufferers and their thriver and survivor colleagues was the loss of a robust in-school support network. One way to think of this support network is as a *reference group* (Nias, 1989). A reference group can be understood as:

> … a filter, determining what information individuals receive and the interpretations which they place upon it, and as a conduit, shaping the nature of the responses such information evokes and the audiences to whom they are directed. (p. 46)

Nias (1989) found reference groups served as an important means of self-protection for primary school teachers and need not be large to be effective at supporting teachers and affirming their values and goals. Having at least one in-school confidant prevented teachers in Nias's study from feeling isolated in their work. However, important considerations in sufferers' emotional experiences of work appeared to be the size of the reference group to which they were accustomed and the proximity of this reference group. Nearly all sufferers agreed having one confidant was crucial in their work, and many did have a colleague who fulfilled this role, but they did not necessarily share the close bond they had shared with a group of close work confidants in the past. "It's so different now," was a common refrain of sufferers when speaking of their relationships with colleagues. It is possible a steady stream of negative feedback from administrators and a lack of positive feedback from trusted colleagues to contradict it and affirm sufferers' values, goals and aspirations negatively shaped their experiences of work.

Notably, not all sufferers lacked close confidants in their school. A subset of sufferers enjoyed strong collegial relationships, and this group suggests strong collegial support does not counterbalance negative administrator relations in sufferers' work lives. Some of these sufferers believed their challenging working conditions made them closer to their colleagues. Peggy explained:

> I guess sometimes struggles bring you together. I actually feel like our faculty's really close . . . sometimes I think we stick together more because of how stressed we are. We help each other out. We remind each other of things all the time, because you don't want to be late. You don't want to *not* do what's expected of you, so we try to help each other out, and "Don't forget that's due tomorrow."

As revealed in the passage, these sufferers helped colleagues with day-to-day challenges and reminders for their work, but they were highly conscious of not wanting to add negative emotions to colleagues' already stressed work lives. For a number of these sufferers, fear of further stressing out their colleagues by venting to them often prevented them from reaching out to share their emotional experiences. Anna explained:

> I have a lot of close friends [at school], but there's just not time. Everyone was so maxed out. The atmosphere itself was so stressed, you didn't feel like you could tell anybody without stressing anybody else out.

Instead of sharing their negative emotional experiences with colleagues and potentially burdening them with these feelings, sufferers often chose to keep their negative emotions to themselves. Caring about the emotional state of other teachers and wanting to be a supportive colleague prevented these sufferers from sharing their own negative emotional experiences at work. Thrivers and survivors noted sharing and venting with their colleagues helped them move on from frustrations and concerns without feeling the need to ruminate on them. It is possible sufferers' internalization of negative work emotions contributed to their negative rumination on them. The experience of these sufferers illustrates the high personal cost of wanting to avoid being an emotional burden to one's colleagues.

Like thrivers and survivors, sufferers found friends and family outside of education served as poor confidants for their emotional experiences of work:

I will talk to non-teachers about school, but they don't get it, so that is almost just as stressful. (Patricia)

My husband doesn't necessarily understand. "Why are you letting them do that? Why are you letting them talk to you like that? Why didn't you call the principal?" He's constantly like, "Why didn't you do this instead?" He doesn't understand, [because] he's not a teacher . . . . I do find myself talking to him, because I talk to him about everything, but at the same time, it's hard for him to really empathize and see where I'm coming from with certain [concerns and frustrations]. (Grace)

Similar to thrivers and survivors, many sufferers found sharing their emotional experiences of work with these non-educator friends and loved ones made them feel misunderstood, and sometimes, even more stressed. Such sharing accentuated how little these individuals understood of their work, which left sufferers feeling alone and discouraged. Most sufferers avoided discussing their negative work emotions with friends and family members, when possible.

Take a Break

Sometimes sufferers coped with their negative work emotions and pervasive sense of stress by taking a break from their work. Patricia explained:

To relieve the stress, you have to set boundaries, step away from the job, and know that, "You know what? I'm gone. I'm not doing that anymore. That's not my responsibility right now." Setting boundaries is *so* important.

As revealed in the passage, a number of sufferers believed taking a break was an important and effective emotional coping strategy, but they struggled to actually *take* them. Many sufferers

explained they had a hard time separating themselves from their work, and they particularly

struggled to stop thinking about it when they were away from it. Some sufferers recognized this

lack of a work-life boundary negatively impacted their personal lives. "It was affecting my

relationship, talking and thinking about work 24/7," said Jacqueline. These sufferers attempted to

establish a more distinct physical boundary between their work and personal lives by making an

effort to not bring work materials home with them. Sally explained:

> If I'm here [at school] and I'm stressed, that's fine. I'll get what I need to get done here,
> but I am not going to take it home. I did a lot of that my first year, and it spilled over into
> my home life, and that's not fair to my husband or my child. I realized that and had a new
> perspective going into my 2nd year teaching. I was more motivated in the balance part of
> *really* balancing.

As revealed in the passage, these sufferers coped with their negative work emotions by

establishing a work-life boundary that allowed them to spend more quality time with their family

and friends. Although taking a break from work lessened their guilt and frustration at the lack of

balance between their work and personal life, many sufferers found instituting and maintaining

such a work-life boundary a constant challenge.

Some sufferers also attempted to make time away from work to engaged in forms of self-

care, but there was a sense these attempts to take care of oneself were only temporary quick-fixes

in a long term, losing battle toward ill-health. Patricia explained:

> I go overboard when it comes to trying to develop a sense of peace and anti-stressing. I
> practice yoga; I meditate; I travel; I keep track of my sleep; I eat well. I'm on this
> bandwagon of trying so hard to maintain life, because what I do is so stressful. I know
> that. I knew that going into it . . . . I play with my kid. I've got to have a life outside

school . . . . I try to keep a practice for some things, whether it's journaling, or walking

the dog, or meditating. You have to have something that's just for you that you commit

to. Sometimes even though you feel like you don't want to do it or don't need it, you've

got to do it.

As revealed in the passage, many sufferers believed time away from work was crucial to allow

them to recharge. But nearly all sufferers found themselves struggling to make time for such self-

care and hobbies as they tried to meet expectations set for them in their work. It is possible the

difficulty many sufferers found making time to relax and recharge contributed to their sense of

being overwhelmed and constantly stressed in their work.

Sometimes, sufferers took a break when they were exasperated and felt they had nothing

left to give to their work. Tiffany explained:

Sometimes I just give up. I just go, "You know what? Screw this," and I go home. All I

can do is my best." . . . . It's helping me get through a school year. It's helping me

rejuvenate and go deal with another month or so, but it's not helping fix the sense or the

knowledge that . . . the amount of testing and the amount of data demands and stuff is not

okay. It's not fixing that.

As revealed in the passage, taking a break sometimes somewhat alleviated sufferers' pressing

negative emotions, but did not make them feel wholly reenergized and excited about their work;

taking the occasional break and time for themselves offered only temporary reprieve from their

negative work emotions. *Doing one's best* and *taking a break* were strategies employed in some

fashion by all three groups of teachers in this study, but Tiffany articulates an important

distinction between how a number of sufferers viewed *themselves* when taking a break in

contrast to thrivers and survivors. Sufferers granted themselves a break from the work when they

were at the end of their emotional rope and felt they had nothing left to give. At these times, they often felt exhausted by their hard work and frustrated and discouraged by what they interpreted as their own inadequacy. By "giving up," they accepted that their best was not good enough, and they left work with a negative view of themselves, having failed to adequately meet the perceived expectations for their work.

Bide Time

Sufferers also managed their negative emotions by making plans to leave their current school. Pursing alternative employment options allowed sufferers to take comfort in knowing their negative experience of work was short-term. They derived relief from their negative work emotions by going into "countdown mode" and focusing on the increasingly short duration of their remaining time at their school. "Every day I'm just telling myself, 'I only have five more months left,'" explained Alice, who made plans to move to a new school in her district the following school year. In some ways, this coping strategy overlapped with accentuating the positive in their work, because knowing they only had a few more days, weeks or months left in their current school was a source of relief, gratitude and happiness for these sufferers. It also allowed them to invest hope and positive expectations in the future. Alice continued:

> I just need to get to a school that's in line with my philosophy . . . that's what my hope is for this new school. Maybe the principal will have to hear from the teachers on how to build the school from the ground up; how to start a new school and how to operate certain things. At least I can give my input . . . and what my opinion is and how it has worked for me . . . I hope, at least, the principal is willing to [listen to us]. There is a lot involved in opening a new school, so I think the principal will have to depend on teachers' input to make it [a success].

As revealed in the passage, sufferers who planned to leave their current school hoped they were moving to a school more aligned with their pedagogical beliefs where they could collaborate with school leaders to create the best possible learning environment for students. The hope their input and experience might be valued by their administrators in the near future helped them cope with their current negative work emotions.

It was common for sufferers who were biding their time until they could leave their school to withdraw their full commitment from the school in order to manage their anger and frustration with their work. Some of these sufferers backed off of extracurricular school activities for which they had volunteered their time in the past. For example, Will founded and ran a chess club, Science Olympiad team and a robotics club at his school. He was deeply offended when he received two N.I. evaluation scores for what he considered insignificant administrative details, and he made plans to leave his school at the end of the following school year. Will was angry and hurt that administrative details that contributed nothing to his effectiveness as a teacher, from his perspective, were valued over the many hours of his personal time he volunteered to the school to enrich students' learning experiences. Will chose not to lead any teams or clubs at his school the following year. He explained:

> They aren't paying me to do chess club, they're paying me to teach. If they're saying, "You're not doing a good enough job teaching, therefore you're going to get a Needs Improvement," then I have to go, "Well say goodbye to chess, I'm not doing any robotics, I'm not doing any Science Olympiad, I'll just work on my classroom."

As revealed in the passage, resentment and bitterness at administrators' focus on administrative tasks rather than meaningful learning activities made some sufferers want to withdraw their personal investment of time and energy from their school. Withdrawing one's commitment as

one bided one's time until one could leave the school came at a personal to these sufferers, because it prevented them from engaging with students in meaningful ways that previously brought them pleasure. This withdrawal of commitment also came at a cost to the students and institution, since these teacher-led extra-curricular activities were no longer available to students. Another disadvantage of sufferers biding their time from an institutional perspective is that these sufferers typically withheld their negative emotional experiences of work and then escaped from the school. Thus, the conditions that produced those negative emotions went unchanged.

Summary

This chapter explored the emotional lives of sufferers, the final group of teachers in this study. Sufferers shared similar beliefs about their work and similar work aspirations to thrivers and survivors. Sufferers' pedagogical beliefs were grounded in constructivist theory and a focus on learning process over student performance. They saw themselves as advocates for and protectors of their students, and they aspired to be caring, supportive, effective teachers who positively impacted their students' lives.

Sufferers experienced some positive emotions in their work. Their greatest moments of joy and pride came from interactions with students, parents and colleagues. These interactions made them feel they had successfully accomplished meaningful work. However, unlike thrivers and survivors, sufferers' experience of work was primarily characterized by negative emotions. They felt least able to enact their pedagogical beliefs and the least successful of the teachers in this study. Sufferers also had the most troubled relationships with administrators. These relationships were characterized by a lack of trust, lack of respect, lack of support and a lack of appreciation. Administrators' autocratic leadership style, focus on appearance over substantive learning, expectations of uniformity, lack of experience in high poverty teaching,

micromanagement of teachers' work and lack of support and appreciation for teachers contributed to sufferers' lack of trust in and respect for them. Sufferers frequently questioned the benefit to students and the school community of their administrators' policies and new initiatives. More so than thrivers or survivors, sufferers attempted to follow administrators' expectations for their work. It is possible the constant teaching in accord with administrators' expectations and against their belief system and attempting to meet the unrealistic expectations of administrators wore on sufferers and contributed to their negative emotional experiences of work. They felt a more pressing weight of work overload than either thrivers or survivors.

Another pattern that distinguished the emotional lives of sufferers from those of thrivers and survivors related to their relationships with colleagues. Many sufferers did not feel a close connection to their current work colleagues, and a sense of loss was central to their work identity as they reflected on the robust in-school social support network they enjoyed in the past. Notably, a small group of sufferers did enjoy strong in-school collegial relationships, but these relationships did not counterbalance their negative emotional experiences of work. Similar to survivors, unsupportive and unknowledgeable support teachers were sometimes a direct source of frustration to sufferers.

Sufferers relied on six predominant strategies to cope with their work emotions: *play the game, ruminate on one's negative work emotions, accentuate the positive, reach out to one's social support network, take a break* and *bide one's time.* Some of these coping strategies temporarily minimized sufferers' negative work emotions, while others exacerbated them. In contrast to the strategies of thrivers and survivors, none of sufferers' coping strategies provided extended relief from their negative work emotions. In particular, negative rumination always intensified rather than reduced sufferers' negative emotional experiences of work. Sufferers

experienced the highest degree of frustration, anxiety, sadness, exhaustion and work-related

illness of all teachers in this study. Some sufferers felt they were beginning to burn out.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, I examined how high poverty elementary school teachers emotionally experienced their work and coped with their emotional experiences. In particular, I focused my investigation on how teachers' emotional experiences and coping strategies related to their beliefs about their work, themselves and their work relationships. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the results of the study, offer an interpretation of the findings and introduce a model to explain teachers' emotional work lives. I discuss the implications of this work for researchers, school leaders and policy makers. I conclude by recognizing several limitations of the present study and making recommendations for future research.

Overview of Teachers' Emotional Lives

My approach to this work has been highly inductive. I relied primarily on the accounts of teachers to explain their emotional work lives, and through their stories, they shed light on themselves and the world of high poverty public elementary schools. Three emotional identities emerged from teachers' accounts of their emotional experiences of work and ways of coping with their work emotions. I labeled these emotional identities *thrivers, survivors* and *sufferers.* Distinct patterns related to teachers' beliefs about their work, themselves, their work relationships, their emotional experiences and their coping strategies distinguished these emotional identity groups. Tables 5 and 6 provide a summary of these patterns.

176

Table 5

Overall Patterns in Teachers' Emotional Lives

Dimension of Work	Thrivers	Survivors	Sufferers
Work beliefs	constructivist; academic + social mission; democratic, decentralized workplace; teacher as facilitator of learning, supportive, competent + effective	constructivist; academic + social mission; democratic, decentralized workplace; teacher as facilitator of learning, supportive, competent + effective	constructivist; academic + social mission; democratic, decentralized workplace; teacher as facilitator of learning, supportive, competent + effective
Aspiration	positively impact students' lives	positively impact students' lives	positively impact students' lives
Realization of work beliefs	realized	somewhat realized	largely unrealized
Work Identity	protector/advocate; caring; service-oriented; successful	protector/advocate; caring; service-oriented; rule-follower; mostly successful	protector/advocate; caring; service-oriented; rule-follower; unsuccessful; sense of loss
Administrator relations (characterized by)	positive (trust, respect, support + appreciation)	mixed (lack of trust, lack of respect + lack of support)	negative (acute lack of trust, lack of respect, lack of support + lack of appreciation)
Colleague relations (nature; number)	positive; plentiful	positive/mixed; some	mixed; few
Student and parent relations	positive	positive/mixed	positive/mixed
Working Conditions	some autonomy; collaborative work culture; administrative task overload	limited autonomy; performance-driven, undemocratic work culture; poor admin. communication; lack of admin. experience; frequent new initiatives; task overload	limited autonomy; performance-driven, undemocratic work culture; poor admin. communication; lack of admin. experience; frequent new initiatives; task overload
Predominant emotional experience	happiness	happiness/mixed	frustration, anxiety, sadness, regret
Coping	successfully	successfully	unsuccessfully
School Commitment	remain in current school	remain in current school	leave current school

Table 6

Predominant Teacher Coping Strategies

Thrivers	Survivors	Sufferers
reach out to social support network	play the game	play the game
accentuate the positive	reach out to social support network	ruminate on negative work emotions
empathize with others	accentuate the positive	accentuate the positive
be true to beliefs	empathize with others	reach out to social support network
create breaks from work	set a firm work-life boundary	take a break
		bide time

Similarities

As can be seen in Table 5, similar patterns characterized the work beliefs and work aspirations of thrivers, survivors and sufferers. Their pedagogical beliefs were grounded in constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and a focus on learning process over student performance. They believed teachers should facilitate student learning and be supportive, competent and effective in their work. Teachers believed that an academic and social mission were central to their work. Along with facilitating mastery of academic knowledge, they aspired to teach students skills that would help them be effective citizens. All teachers felt a democratic work culture in which they had a say in school initiatives, policies and procedures was in the best interest of students and the school. They also believed teacher autonomy and well-being were important to school success. Finally, all teachers in this study aspired, first and foremost, to positively impact the lives of their students. Several patterns also united the professional identities of thrivers, survivors and sufferers. Caring was central to teachers' understanding of

themselves and all teachers had a strong orientation toward service. They saw themselves as advocates for and protectors of their students.

Differences

Three characteristics distinguished the professional identities of thrivers, survivors and sufferers. Survivors and sufferers, but not thrivers, saw themselves as rule-followers. Teachers also differed in how successful they believed themselves to be in enacting their work beliefs, which directly corresponded to how successful they felt as teachers. Thrivers felt largely successful in their work, survivors mostly successful and sufferers rarely successful. Additionally, a sense of loss was central to the professional identity of sufferers. Several other patterns distinguished the work lives of thrivers, survivors and sufferers.

Thrivers. Thrivers felt trusted, respected, supported and appreciated by their administrators and colleagues. Their ability to develop relationships with their students and teach them in ways they believed made a difference in their lives was a great source of joy and pride for them. Thrivers felt they had some control over important aspects of their work, and they enjoyed relatively strong communication with their administrators. The prevailing emotional experience of thrivers was happiness in their work. Although they occasionally experienced work-related frustrations and worries, thrivers felt able to cope with these emotions such that they did not dominate their work lives.

As shown in Table 6, the five primary strategies thrivers relied on to cope with their emotional experiences of work included*: reach out to one's social support network, accentuate the positive, empathize with others, be true to one's beliefs* and *create breaks for oneself.* These strategies allowed thrivers to accentuate their positive emotional experiences and minimize or

eliminate their negative ones. All thrivers, with the exception of one retiring teacher, planned to continue teaching in their school the following school year.

Survivors. Survivors had a more complex relationship with their administrators than that of thrivers. Survivors liked their administrators on a personal level, but they disagreed with some of the professional decisions made by these individuals. Administrators' focus on increasing student performance on standardized tests, unwillingness to recognize the individuality of students, lack of experience in high poverty teaching and lack of openness to communicating and collaborating with teachers made it difficult, at times, for survivors to trust and respect them. Survivors frequently felt unsupported by their administrators as they attempted to enact school initiatives, and they questioned the benefit to students of their school's constantly changing policies. Unlike thrivers, who felt confident their administrators worked to achieve what was in the best interest of their students, many survivors felt students' and teachers' interests often took a back seat to demonstrating increased student standardized test performance. Colleagues were a tremendous emotional resource for survivors, but they enjoyed fewer positive relationships with their colleagues than did thrivers. At times, negative, unsupportive and unknowledgeable colleagues were a direct source of frustration for them. Survivors' emotional experiences of work were characterized by a relatively balanced mix of positive and negative emotions, but on the whole, survivors felt greater happiness than unhappiness in their work. Although they experienced a greater number of negative emotions than thrivers, survivors were also able to find ways of coping with their negative work emotions such that these emotions did not dominate their work lives.

The five primary strategies survivors used to negotiate their emotions included: *play the game, reach out to one's social support network, accentuate the positive, empathize with others*

and *set a firm work-life boundary.* The strategy of *play the game* most distinguished survivors'

coping from that of thrivers. While this coping strategy helped many survivors maintain an

authentic sense of self in the face of frustrating situations at work, it also served to reproduce

those frustrating work situations. It is also possible this surface acting strategy contributed to

survivors' greater sense of stress and exhaustion in their work (Grandey, 2003). Overall,

survivors' coping strategies allowed them to minimize worries and frustrations in their work and

feel largely successful in their efforts to positively contribute to students' lives. Nearly seventy

percent of survivors planned to continue teaching in their current school the following school

year.

Sufferers. Sufferers relationships with their administrators were characterized by an

acute lack of trust, lack of respect, lack of support and lack of appreciation. Administrators'

autocratic leadership style, focus on appearance over substantive learning, expectations of

uniformity, lack of experience in high poverty teaching, micromanagement of teachers' work and

lack of support and appreciation for teachers contributed to sufferers' lack of trust in and respect

for them. Sufferers frequently questioned the benefit to students and the school community of

their administrators' policies and new initiatives. Many sufferers did not feel a close connection

to their current work colleagues and felt a sense of loss for a robust in-school social support

network they enjoyed in the past. Similar to survivors, unsupportive and unknowledgeable

support teachers were sometimes a direct source of frustration to sufferers. Unlike thrivers and

survivors, the emotional work lives of sufferers were dominated by negative emotions with

which they struggled to cope.

Sufferers relied on six predominant strategies to cope with their work emotions: *play the*

game, ruminate on one's negative work emotions, accentuate the positive, reach out to one's

social support network, take a break and *bide one's time.* Some of these coping strategies

temporarily minimized sufferers' negative work emotions, while others exacerbated them. In

contrast to the strategies of thrivers and survivors, none of sufferers' coping strategies provided

extended relief from their negative work emotions. In particular, negative rumination always

intensified rather than reduced sufferers' negative emotional experiences of work. Notably, they

engaged in the surface acting strategy of *play the game*, but did not successfully implement any

deep acting coping strategies, which are associated with greater worker well-being (Wang et al.,

2011). Sufferers felt a more pressing weight of work overload than either thrivers or survivors.

Stress and exhaustion were central characteristics of their work lives, and they experienced the

highest number of work-related illnesses of all teachers in this study. Some sufferers felt the

onset of burnout. All sufferers considered leaving their school at the end of the school year.

Discussion and Implications

Five interrelated concepts formed the theoretical foundation of this study of the emotional

work lives of high poverty elementary school teachers: *emotional experience, identity, work*

beliefs, relationships and *emotional coping*. Figure 2 introduces a tentative model representing

the relationship among these concepts, including the additional concept of *working conditions*.

Relationships and working conditions. The most pervasive and persistent theme to

emerge from this study was the centrality of high poverty teachers' relationships with school

administrators to their subjective emotional experiences of work. In particular, the amount of

respect, trust, support and *appreciation* teachers perceived themselves to have from their

administrators influenced all other aspects of their work experience. Somewhat unexpectedly,

this influence included teachers' perception of working conditions in their school. At the outset

of this dissertation, based on my reading of existing empirical literature, I assumed teachers'

working conditions in high poverty schools would be similarly challenging. Specifically, I assumed that teachers' physical and social working conditions would be difficult, they would be required to fulfill many roles and responsibilities, human and material resources would be limited and the emotional demands of their work would be high. However, the results of this study indicate high poverty teachers' interpretations of their school working conditions varied, depending in large part on the presence or absence of trust, respect, support and appreciation from their school administrators. Most prominently, these central relational characteristics shaped teachers' perception of their level of pedagogical autonomy, the quantity and quality of administrator-teacher communication, the amount of say teachers had in school policies and procedures, the amount of teacher turnover in the school, teachers' experiences of work overload and teachers' relations with students, parents and colleagues. Thrivers, who enjoyed strong relations with their administrators, also experienced the most positive working conditions and overall relationships with students, parents and colleagues of the teachers in this study. Survivors, whose relationships with administrators were characterized by less trust, support and respect than thrivers, experienced less pedagogical autonomy, poorer administrator-teacher communication, little say in school policies and procedures, higher faculty turnover and greater task overload. These challenging working conditions resulted in a higher number of behavior problems with students, negative interactions with parents and frustrating interactions with colleagues. Sufferers, who experienced the least trust, support, respect and appreciation from administrators, felt the challenge of these negative working conditions most acutely, and encountered the highest number of student behavior problems and negative interactions with parents of all teachers in the study.

It is important to note that survivors and sufferers also experienced positive relationships with students and parents, and these relationships were among their most joyous experiences of work. An interesting and somewhat counterintuitive finding was that survivors and sufferers derived greater joy from their positive relationships with parents than thrivers. One possible explanation for this finding is that having to deal with aggressive, bullying parents more frequently than thrivers led these teachers to place greater value on their strong, positive relationships with other parents. That survivors and sufferers did not enjoy a larger number of these positive relationships likely added to their more negative emotional experiences of work than thrivers.

Given some of the difficult interactions survivors and sufferers experienced in their school with students and parents, it was somewhat surprising that neither group mentioned student or parent interactions as a primary source of work frustration. This finding can be largely understood by examining teachers' expectations for their work. Teachers in this study did not look forward to challenging situations with students and parents, but they expected to encounter such situations occasionally as part of their work. However, they also expected to receive administrator support in dealing with such situations. Not receiving this support clashed with their beliefs about the role of an administrator and made their work lives substantially more difficult, from their perspective. Thus, it was inadequate support from administrators that was their primary source of frustration.

Sufferers and survivors also experienced fewer positive relationships with colleagues than thrivers. For many sufferers, this finding was partly due to the high teacher turnover in their school and the loss of colleagues with whom they shared positive relations in the past. But sufferers and survivors also perceived some of their colleagues lacked competency in their work

and provided inadequate support to teachers. In nearly all cases, such frustrations related to interactions with support teachers and instructional coaches rather than classroom teachers. This finding revealed a tension between classroom and support teachers that is worthy of future research, as discussed later in this chapter.

Additionally, survivors, unlike thrivers or sufferers, were sometimes frustrated by colleagues' negativity. Two possibilities may account for this difference in survivor and thriver collegial experiences. Survivors' challenging conditions of work, such as task overload, limited autonomy, poor administrator communication and constantly changing school policies and procedures, may have created greater opportunity for negativity in their workplace than in the workplace of thrivers, who perceived their conditions of work more positively. Thus, it is possible collegial negativity was not a primary frustration of thrivers for the simple reason that they rarely encountered such negativity. It is also possible survivors' heightened negative work emotions and reliance on surface acting in their dealings with administrators decreased their tolerance for colleagues who they perceived to be negative. They expressed resentment when colleagues chose to vent in group meetings when they believed there was pressing work to be done. Being a supportive colleague in such situations demanded surface acting of them to mask their inner frustration, and it is likely such additional surface acting added to their feelings of stress and exhaustion in their work, which resulted in frustration.

For sufferers, two possibilities may explain why collegial negativity was not a primary work frustration. First, it is possible sufferers also encountered less collegial negativity than survivors. This may have been due to the fact that most sufferers enjoyed few close relationships with colleagues or that there was an aversion among colleagues in sufferers' schools to burdening each other with their negative emotions given their already stressful working

conditions. A second possibility is that their own experience of work was itself so negative and consistent with colleagues' complaints that they were less bothered by this colleague negativity than survivors. In other words, what survivors viewed as negativity, sufferers may have viewed as honesty.

Another somewhat counterintuitive finding regarding teachers' work relationships was that only sufferers counted positive interactions with colleagues among their greatest work joys. Thrivers and survivors were more likely to view colleagues as an emotional resource in their work. While they believed their relationships with colleagues contributed to their overall emotional well-being and happiness at work, they did not view colleagues as a primary source of joy themselves. It is possible the combination of few strong collegial relationships and sufferers' more troubled emotional experiences of work may account for sufferers' conscious joy derived from their relationships with colleagues. When one's experience of work is overwhelmingly negative and there is little institutional support in place, it seems likely supportive colleagues could become a primary joy in one's work, because they offer much needed emotional support during a time characterized by extreme stress and exhaustion.

Work beliefs and professional identity. As can be seen in Figure 2, the interaction of relationships and conditions of work within the school also interacted with teachers' personal work beliefs and professional identity, either aiding or thwarting teachers' ability to enact these personal belief systems. Teachers' work beliefs and several elements of their professional identity, i.e., their view of themselves as caring, service-oriented individuals and protectors of and advocates for their students, were unaltered by their work relationships and conditions of their work. The relative stability of these beliefs about their work and themselves is consistent with previous research on primary teachers (Nias, 1989). However, teachers' views of

themselves as successful or unsuccessful in their work were heavily dependent on and interacted with all concepts represented in Figure 2.

Teachers' strong orientation toward service and caring in this study is similar to existing education research that suggests the teaching profession attracts individuals with a caring, public-service orientation (Waller, 1932; Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1999). It is noteworthy that teachers also shared such similar pedagogical beliefs about their work. An explanation for such pedagogical similarities may be similarities in the curriculum and values imparted by U.S. teacher training programs. Typically grounded in the education theories of John Dewey (1902), Emile Durkheim (1961) and Lev Vygotsky (1978), it seems likely such programs emphasize to pre-service teachers a central moral imperative in their work and the advantages of a social constructivist pedagogy.

The present work offers a departure from existing teacher emotions research that suggests highly committed, caring teachers are the most vulnerable to experiencing unpleasant emotions in their work (Woods, 1989). Such work asserts these teachers find themselves unable to compromise their teaching or alter their commitment to it, and thus work problems have greater emotional impact for them. However, the present findings did not suggest higher commitment to one's work or a caring orientation distinguished teachers who largely experienced unpleasant emotions in their work. Rather, caring was central to all high poverty teachers' understanding of themselves, and nearly all of the teachers in this study were highly committed to teaching itself. In some cases, teachers' disillusionment with their ability to realize their work beliefs led to regret about choosing teaching as a career, but they continued to give a great deal of themselves in their work. Sufferers' greater commitment to following their administrators' expectations for their work revealed a difference in fear of consequences for noncompliance rather than

commitment to the work itself, but these teachers were *least* rather than most committed to continuing to teach in their current school.

Emotional experience, coping and emotional identity. The interaction between teachers' personal belief systems and work context produced particular emotional experiences of work and ways of coping with those emotional experiences. Teachers' interpretations of their emotional experiences and their ability to cope with these experiences gave rise to their emotional identity as a *thriver*, *survivor* or *sufferer*.

In this study, the deep acting strategies of *empathizing with others* and *being true to one's beliefs* were associated with teachers' ability to successfully cope with their negative work emotions and overall positive emotional experiences of work. These findings are consistent with literature that suggests deep acting is associated with worker well-being and fewer negative consequences for workers than surface acting (Grandey, 2003; Wang et al., 2011; Zapf et al., 2006). This finding is interesting given the individual effort demanded by deep acting to alter one's emotions. It would appear the benefits of deep acting, for example, in reduced emotional dissonance and positive interpersonal interactions, may replenish teachers' emotional resources in ways that surface acting does not.

Consistent with previous studies, the present findings also suggest an association between surface acting and teachers' experiences of negative emotions and emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2003; Wang et al., 2011; Zapf et al., 2006). Additionally, it is possible surface acting contributed to negative relations with administrators. Grandey (2003) found service workers who engaged in surface acting were less likely to demonstrate warmth, sincerity and friendliness and were more likely to break character in interactions with others. Given this finding, it is possible administrators perceived survivors and sufferers' performance while *playing the game* as

inauthentic. If so, it seems likely this strategy may have negatively affected administrators' relationship with survivors and sufferers. It is interesting to note that survivors, who engaged in both deep and surface acting strategies, had a more negative overall emotional experience of work than thrivers, who did not engage in surface acting. This finding supports the claim that surface acting drains workers' emotional resources and has negative implications for their emotional state over time (Hochschild, 1983). It would appear engaging in some deep acting as a way of coping with one's negative work emotions is not enough to fully restore one's emotional resources at work.

The findings of this study also support research indicating colleagues are a crucial emotional resource for teachers in their work (Day et al., 2009). Contrary to previous research on primary teachers (Nias, 1989), however, it would appear the *number* of these relationships and *proximity* of one's trusted confidants matter in high poverty elementary school teachers' emotional experiences of work. Thrivers, who enjoyed the largest number of positive, in-school relationships with colleagues, had the most positive emotional experiences of work of teachers in this study. Survivors, who enjoyed fewer positive, in-school relationships with colleagues, had a less positive overall emotion experience of work than thrivers. However, the existence of at least a few trusted in-school confidants for all survivors appeared to protect them from an overwhelmingly negative emotional experience of work. The vast majority of sufferers enjoyed few if any positive, in-school relationships with colleagues, and they had the most negative emotional experiences of work of teachers in this study. Sufferers' previous work experience with colleagues also appeared to play an important role in their negative emotional experience of work. Nearly all sufferers previously enjoyed a stronger in-school collegial support network than they currently enjoyed in their work. The small group of sufferers who had strong relationships

with their colleagues provide interesting evidence that the benefits of positive relationships with colleagues are not enough to overcome troubled relations with administrators. Such relationships did not replenish sufferers' emotional resources such that they felt positively about their work.

The findings of this study also suggest successfully creating a *work-life boundary* helps restore teachers' emotional resources. While sufferers attempted to take breaks from their work, many found it a challenge to maintain the clear work-life boundary enjoyed by thrivers and survivors. The findings also suggest being able to successfully *accentuate the positive* in one's work helps one overcome negative work emotions. Thrivers and survivors were able to successfully implement this strategy. While sufferers attempted to accentuate the positive in their work, they found this strategy to be less helpful in overcoming their negative emotions, due in large part to the fact that their experiences of work were so overwhelmingly negative that they felt there was little positive to accentuate. One exception was a small subset of sufferers who relied on their faith to help them implement this strategy. This reliance on faith allowed them to successfully adopt a positive outlook in their work, as it did for a small group of thrivers and survivors.

A strategy unique to sufferers that provided relief from their negative work emotions was to *bide one's time* at school. Sufferers who engaged in this form of coping were able to focus on the increasingly short duration of their time in their school, and this focus brought them relief, gratitude, happiness and hope for a positive future. However, this strategy came at a cost to the school for which they worked, as these teachers focused on fulfilling their regular job responsibilities, but withdrew their commitment from extracurricular school activities that demanded additional time and energy of them.
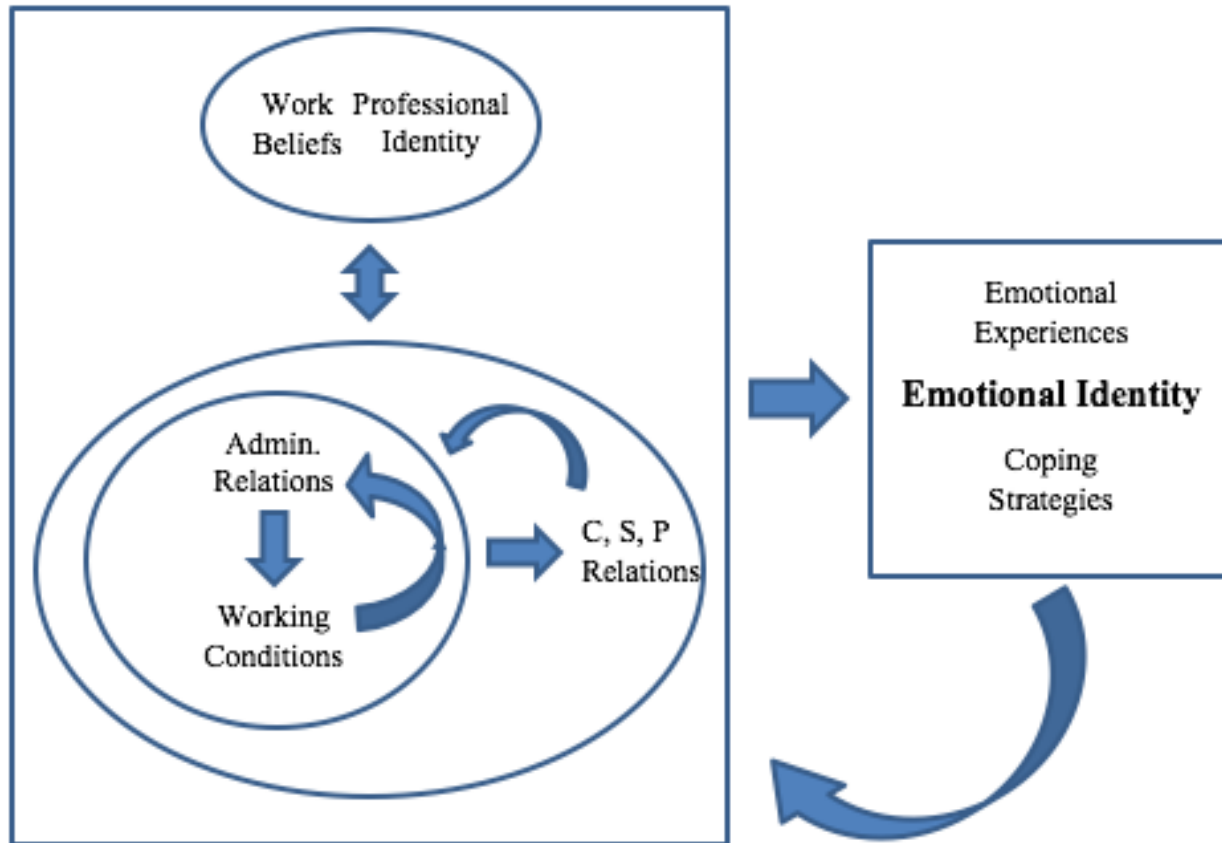
Figure 2

Model of Teachers' Emotional Lives

The findings of this study have implications for research on teacher emotions, teaching as work in high poverty schools and the sociological study of worker emotions. They also have implications for school leaders, district leaders and policy makers.

Teacher emotions research. The findings of this study present a departure from existing teacher emotions literature that suggests students and colleagues produce the strongest of teachers' negative emotions (Day et al., 2009; Hargreaves, 2000). In this study, negative relations with school leaders, which produced a number of additional negative conditions of work and influenced teachers' ability to realize their work beliefs, were the greatest sources of

teacher frustration. Strong relationships with students, parents and colleagues could not overcome teachers' negative relations with administrators and the frustration of their work beliefs. The reasons for such a departure in findings may be due to a difference in setting (elementary, middle, high school; public/private; high poverty/low poverty), the macro sociopolitical climate of teachers' work, and/or conception of terms. Existing teacher emotions research has frequently explored teachers' emotions related to their school leaders separately from their relationships with students and colleagues. The findings of this study suggest these dimensions of teachers' work are interrelated and must be considered together. This is also true of teachers' ability to enact their work beliefs, which has been considered separately from the relational conditions of teachers' work. A more interactive conceptualization of the influence of school leadership on teachers' emotions would benefit this literature and enhance our understanding of teachers' emotional work lives.

This study provides teacher emotions literature with a deeper understanding of teachers' emotional coping strategies, particularly teachers' micropolitical actions to negotiate their work emotions. Existing research indicates the power relations within a school influence the formation of emotions (Kelchtermans, 2005; Zembylas, 2003), but the results of this study suggest this power also heavily influences whether and how teachers resist the expectations of school leaders. Thrivers *followed their beliefs* as one way of coping with work frustrations and concerns, but survivors and sufferers were much more likely to comply with administrators' demands. These teachers were conscious of and eager to avoid "rocking the boat" and encountering the retribution of their administrators for resisting or defying school policies and procedures. Their fear and subsequent compliance related to their own feelings of powerlessness and an aversion to

increasing the difficulty of their work lives rather than an agreement with administrators regarding many of the school policies and procedures themselves.

Teaching as work research. The findings of this study support the growing body of empirical literature on high poverty schools that asserts school working conditions, rather than characteristics of the students themselves, play a central role in teacher satisfaction and teacher turnover (Allensworth et al., 2009; Grissom, 2011; Simon et al., 2015). Specifically, the present work supports the assertion that social conditions of teachers' work highly impact their emotional work experiences. However, it also provides evidence that a more precise conceptualization of the interrelated nature of particular social and conventional working conditions would benefit this literature. Johnson et al. (2012) found social working conditions such as *school culture, principal's leadership* and *relationships with colleagues* were especially important in teachers' experiences of job satisfaction and commitment to their school. *Principal leadership*, conceptualized as a social working condition, was an independent factor from the conventional working condition of *sufficient planning time*, but the findings of the present study indicate social conditions of teachers' work, and principal leadership, in particular, often play an important role *in* conventional working conditions. Thus, claiming that social working conditions are more important to teachers than other conditions of work is misleading. The present findings suggest that positive social conditions *allow for* the presence or absence of conventional working conditions, some of which are highly important to teachers.

Consistent with Ingersoll's (2003) study of U.S. high school teachers, when teachers in the present study perceived their school as a top-down, centralized bureaucracy, they felt deprived of the necessary flexibility and autonomy to do their jobs well. These teachers' predominant emotional experience of work was negative and they felt less committed to their

school. No teachers in this study believed themselves to have complete control over their work.

Thrivers experienced some centralized control, for example, in the school expectation to adhere

to particular curricular content, pacing and ways of assessing their students. When they

encountered this lack of autonomy in their work, they experienced frustration. This frustration by

all teachers in the study when they could not enact their work beliefs is important, because it

underscores the importance of the amount of control teachers have in their work to their

emotional experience of it. The less control teachers had over their work, the more negative their

emotional work experience, the less successful they felt in their work, and the less committed

they were to remaining in their school.

This study provides an interesting point of departure from existing teachers' work

literature on the *type* of control teachers perceived themselves to have in their work. Unlike

existing literature that indicates teachers have a high degree of control over instructional aspects

of their work (Ingersoll, 2003), teachers in this study were most limited in and frustrated by their

lack of instructional control. It is possible this difference in findings is due to differences

between the type of school, high school versus elementary, and if so, this finding presents a

significant contribution to our understanding of differences between high school and elementary

school teachers' experiences of their work. However, it seems more likely this difference reflects

the different sociopolitical climates in which such work was conducted. For example, Ingersoll's

data reflected views of teachers from the 1990's, before No Child Left Behind or Race to the Top

legislation, a period of time that was characterized by a progressive movement of teacher

empowerment. Teachers' limited control over instructional aspects of their work found in this

study likely reflect, at least in part, changes to teachers' work in high poverty schools as a result

of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top legislation. Evidence from the present work that

indicates that instructional control is of great importance to high poverty teachers advances our understanding of the working conditions they greatly value and sheds light on their current feelings about their work.

The findings of this study support Ingersoll's (2003) assertion that some of the most effective means by which administrators control teachers' work are invisible. Fear of administrator retribution was a powerful motivator for survivors and sufferers to comply with administrator expectations. Interestingly, sufferers, who had the most negative relationships with administrators and greatest fear of their retribution, most attempted to follow administrators' expectations for their work. Their attempt to comply with all of administrators' expectations was problematic, for the simple reason all teachers in this study acknowledged: meeting 100% of the expectations for their work was impossible. It seems likely the constant teaching in accord with administrators' expectations and against their work beliefs and attempting to meet the unrealistic expectations of administrators wore on sufferers and contributed to their negative emotional experiences of work.

Sociological study of worker emotions. This study also has implications for the sociological study of worker emotions. The present findings suggest relational elements of work, particularly with one's superiors and coworkers, and the ability to act in accordance with one's work beliefs are central to the subjective experience of one's work and the ability to cope with one's work experiences. In particular, mutual trust, respect, support and appreciation, particularly between managers and workers, may allow individuals working in other challenging occupational contexts to experience a greater number of positive emotions and an overall sense of success and fulfillment in their work, which may influence their desire to continue performing it.

Implications for school leaders, district leaders and policy makers. Findings from this study suggest in their efforts to improve high poverty schools, school leaders and policy makers should pay more attention to teachers' beliefs about their work and the relational conditions in high poverty schools. When teachers' relationships with their administrators were characterized by trust, respect, support and appreciation, they were granted a higher degree of control over their practice, and they were better able to enact their work beliefs. These teachers were primarily happy in their work and committed to their school. However, when teachers' relationships with their administrators were characterized by distrust, lack of respect, lack of support and lack of appreciation and they had little control over central instructional and social decisions in their work, teachers felt undermined in their efforts to realize their work beliefs and meaningfully impact students' lives. They felt largely unhappy in their work and less committed to their school. These findings have implications for the success of such schools as workplaces (Bryk & Scheider, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003; Johnson et al, 2012). In light of existing literature that links the subjective experience of teachers in their workplace to overall school effectiveness (Ingersoll, 2003) and academic productivity (Bryk et al., 2003), the findings of this study suggest school leaders and policy makers can improve the success of high poverty schools by improving these schools as workplaces.

While the sample in the present work was not random and cannot claim representativeness, it is nevertheless interesting to observe the distribution of participants across the identity groups in this study. School leaders and policy makers may find it particularly noteworthy that so few high poverty teachers in this sample identified as thrivers (n = 6) compared to survivors (n = 13) and sufferers (n = 17). On the one hand, thrivers and survivors combined to outnumber the sufferers in this study, but it should give education leaders pause that

nearly half of the teachers in the sample identified as suffering in their work. Teachers are, in the words of Cookson and Persell (1985), "the 'heart and soul' of any school" (p. 85). Enacting school and district policies that embrace teachers' high commitment to care for and serve others and allow them to feel valued and appreciated rather than distrusted and expendable has direct implications for the vitality and success of these schools.

The findings of this study suggest there is much room for improvement to the relational conditions of high poverty teachers' work. Many teachers perceived their work culture to be one that discouraged them from asking questions or expressing opinions that deviated from their principals' beliefs about and vision for the school. Invisible means of social control such as the principal's "bad list" made it possible for some administrators to preserve the false reality that teachers supported their initiatives with enthusiasm, and that the problems, concerns and challenges of individual teachers were isolated incidents and personal problems rather than the product of school-wide policies and conditions of work. Fear of ending up a target of administrator retribution and concern over putting colleagues in such a position effectively deterred many teachers in this study from openly engaging in critical discussions with administrators of problematic initiatives and policies. When teachers knew they could not speak honestly with administrators without repercussions, many felt helpless and powerless to enact positive change in their schools. Most teachers perceived their administrators to have little time or inclination to spend worrying about faculty concerns, health or well-being. Administrators left these teachers with the impression their feelings, regarded with weariness at best and intolerance at worst, had little place in a productive workplace. There were few institutional resources to help teachers deal with the negative emotions that arose from their work, and teachers found

themselves having to draw on personal resources to navigate their challenging work environment, which many felt unable to do effectively.

Perhaps welcomed news for school administrators and district leaders is that improving the relational conditions of teachers' work costs little money and the amount of control leaders have over these conditions is high. However, just because establishing positive relational conditions cost little money does not make such a process quick or easy. School and district leaders need to recognize trust, respect and appreciation are built through their day-to-day interactions with teachers. Although intermittent workshops, retreats, or sensitivity training sessions might benefit administrator-teacher relations, such activities alone will not establish strong relationships between teachers and administrators. Rather, constant attention to relational working conditions is necessary to establish a thriving work culture in these schools. Simple actions such as genuine expressions of gratitude for teachers' work bring feelings of pride and joy to teachers and make them feel valued and appreciated. However, actions such as dismissing teacher concerns produce negative emotions for teachers and contribute to their feelings of being distrusted, disrespected, unsupported and unappreciated.

Poor communication, a frustration of a number of teachers in this study, also contributes to issues of distrust and disrespect between teachers and administrators. Teachers want to understand *why* certain changes occur in their workplace. Without such communication, they are left to make sense of these changes themselves, and the findings of this study suggest such interpretations rarely benefit administrator-teacher relations. For example, a grievance raised by a number of teachers in this study related to the division of strong teams of teachers within a school. There may be any number of reasons a principal might feel compelled to divide an effective team of teachers, but without explanation, teachers saw such divisions as power plays

rather than as decisions to enhance the school community. It is entirely possible in some and maybe all instances in which such divisions occurred for teachers in this study that these divisions *were* power plays on the part of the principal. However, in cases in which this was not true, it was in the best interest of all involved for more transparency in leaders' decisions. District leaders can help foster a more positive and productive environment in these schools by making relational conditions of work a higher priority in their training and evaluations of school administrators.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) recently released a report that revealed a rise in negative school climate, bullying and hate crimes in high poverty schools since the 2016 U.S. national election. This evidence combined with plans to cut spending to federal programs that benefit families of poverty suggest the emotional demands of teaching in high poverty schools may be on the rise in the coming years. Given this challenging sociopolitical climate for high poverty teachers and students, it is particularly imperative school leaders, district leaders and policy makers attend to the relational working conditions in these schools and do what they can to ensure their vitality as places of work and centers of learning. Trust, respect, support and appreciation bind the individuals working in these schools together to provide quality education to students of poverty, and it would seem these individuals need strong bonds now more than ever to succeed in their work.

The results of this study provide a better understanding of the high cost to teachers and students of recent education reform efforts that champion neoliberal education policies and have intensified and deprofessionalized teaching as work. School leaders face strong pressure to institute these neoliberal policies in their schools, but the present study illuminates some of the serious consequences of such policies and why high poverty teachers leave their schools in high

numbers each school year (Ingersoll et al., 2014). High poverty teachers do not have an unlimited emotional reserve that allows them to maintain their energy and enthusiasm when confronted daily with distrust, disrespect, lack of support and little say in their school policies and procedures. When teachers do not feel they can make the difference they aspire to make in their work, the pleasure they derive from that work and their commitment to their school diminish. With the additional demands on teachers in this setting since the 2016 U.S. election, it seems safe to assume students, teachers and society will continue to suffer the consequences of high teacher turnover in these schools until relational conditions of teachers' work improve. This challenge presents a tremendous opportunity for school and district leaders to strengthen the relational bonds between workers in these schools and encourage conditions under which exemplary teaching and learning can take place.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

There were several limitations to the present work. The first limitation was in relying primarily on interview data, which, while providing an excellent account of teachers' subjective experiences, provided a limited account of work relationships and the high poverty school setting. A second limitation related to the interview itself. By conducting just one interview with teachers, their stories reflected their understandings and emotions at a particular time and place, but it was not possible to determine how subject to change these understandings and emotions were over time. A third limitation of this study related to my theoretical framework. While this framework provided a rich means for helping me understand the emotional experiences of high poverty elementary school teachers, it did not provide a deep understanding of the influence of gender or the role of race or ethnicity in teachers' emotional experiences of work. Future work

that draws on feminist and/or race theory would further enhance our understanding of high poverty teachers' emotional work lives.

The findings of this study present several additional opportunities for future research. The first relates to a greater understanding of administrator-teacher relations in high poverty schools and how they relate to school working conditions. Specifically, distinguishing between teachers' relationships with different types of administrators would advance our understanding of teachers' work in high poverty schools and our knowledge of these schools as workplaces. Teachers in this study often discussed their administrators as a monolithic group, but it was also clear they believed their principal wielded ultimate power in their workplace. An exploration of differences between teachers' relationships with their assistant principal(s) and how such relationships interact with teachers' relationships with their principal, their overall emotional experiences of work and ways of coping with their work experiences would benefit our understanding of these teachers' work lives. For example, how does a positive relationship with an assistant principal impact teachers' emotional experience of work and ways of coping with their work emotions? How does the emotional impact of this relationship compare to that of supportive colleagues and/or a supportive principal? How does an unsupportive assistant principal influence teachers' emotional experiences of work and emotional coping strategies? How does such a relationship relate to teachers' relationship with the principal?

Second, a more comprehensive examination of high poverty teachers' interpretations of and feelings about their work in relation to the interpretations and feelings of school administrators would broaden our understanding of the high poverty school as a workplace. Conducting in-depth interviews with teachers *and* school administrators as well as observations of teacher-administrator interactions would provide a more complete picture of these

relationships and high poverty elementary schools as workplaces. Such an investigation might shed light on questions raised by this work such as how administrators interpret teachers' efforts at surface acting versus deep acting. Do they recognize the inauthenticity of teachers' surface acting, particularly in situations in which teachers are *playing the game*? If so, how does this recognition affect their feelings about and interactions with these teachers?

A third recommendation for future research relates to a greater understanding of the work culture among colleagues in high poverty elementary schools. In particular, further exploration of the emotional relationship between classroom teachers and support teachers would advance our understanding of high poverty teachers' emotional work lives and shed additional light on the working conditions that produce relational distrust between these groups of teachers. Also, exploring the role of colleagues in *controlling* each other's behavior and how this control relates to teachers' subjective emotional experiences and ways of coping with their work emotions is worthy of exploration. Data from this study suggest veteran colleagues effectively employ fear-based strategies to silence newer teachers to the school for what they perceive to be the collective good of the group, but a greater understanding of these collegial power dynamics is needed.

A final recommendation for future research is to conduct a longitudinal study of the emotional lives of high poverty elementary school teachers. Such an investigation would illuminate how teachers' emotional experiences and ways of coping fluctuate over time and provide us with a better understanding of the stability of teachers' emotional identities. Such research may also reveal dispositional traits or understandings that relate to the resiliency of individuals to their work circumstances and further illuminate working conditions that result in teachers identifying as thrivers, survivors and sufferers. Finally, such work may provide an understanding of the relationship between teachers' emotional identity and experiences of

burnout. Existing theoretic and empirical literature suggests the sufferers in this study experienced four factors associated with burnout: emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, lack of personal control and lack of support in their school (Huberman et al., 1999; Maslach et al., 1981). Following high poverty teachers over time would allow us a greater understanding of how and why burnout develops. Do all sufferers eventually experience burnout? If not, what distinguishes teachers who experience burnout from those who do not? Are thrivers and survivors also at risk of experiencing burnout? How are these teachers' career experiences and ways of coping similar to and different from their sufferer colleagues? Such knowledge would enhance our understanding of the emotional lives of high poverty teachers and may further illuminate what school leaders, district leaders and policymakers can do to improve the experience of teaching as work in high poverty elementary schools.

Conclusion

I began this research journey as a disillusioned high poverty school teacher, but the findings of this study give me a cautious sense of hope and optimism for the future of high poverty schools as workplaces. In contrast to the dominant narrative in our society that high poverty teachers are lazy, unintelligent and the primary problem with high poverty schools, my findings supported my own experience of working with these teachers; I found them to be industrious, thoughtful and highly committed to teaching as work. The teachers in this study believed in the potential of their work to positively affect lives and were willing to give much of themselves to their work. These qualities would seem valuable assets in a group of workers, certainly qualities to be nurtured and protected rather than squandered. As the number of high poverty schools in the U.S. grows each year, we can ill-afford to lose knowledgeable, committed teachers from these schools at such high rates. It is incumbent on school leaders and policy

makers to improve the conditions of work in high poverty schools by instituting policies that embrace teachers' work beliefs and strengthen the relational bonds within these schools. If they do so, the future of quality teaching and learning in high poverty schools seems bright.

REFERENCES

Allensworth, E., Ponisciak, S., & Mazzeo, C. (2009). The schools teachers leave: Teacher mobility in Chicago Public Schools. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research—University of Chicago.

Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C., & Vohs, K. D. (2001). Bad is stronger than good, *Review of General Psychology 5*(4), 323-370.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bottery, M. (2003). The leadership of learning communities in a culture of unhappiness. *School Leadership and Management, 23*(2), 187-207.

Bryk, A. S., & Scheider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform, *Educational Leadership 60*(6), 40-45.

Bullough, R. V. (2009). Seeking eudaimonia: The emotions in learning to teach and to mentor. In P. A. Schutz & M. Zembylas (Eds.), *Advances in teacher emotion research: The impact on teachers' lives* (pp. 33-52). Dordrecht: Springer.

Byrne, B. (1999). The nomological network of teacher burnout: A literature review and empirically validated model. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 15-37). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chang, M. L. (2009). An appraisal perspective of teacher burnout: Examining the emotional work of teachers. *Educational Psychology Review, 21,* 193-128.

Chang, M. L. (2013). Toward a theoretical model to understand teacher emotions and

    teacher burnout in the context of student misbehavior: Appraisal, regulation and coping.

    Motivation and Emotion, 37, 799-817.

Charmaz, K. (2014). Constructing grounded theory (2nd ed.). London: Sage

    Publications.

Cherniss, C. (1980). Professional burnout in human service organisations. New York:

    Praeger.

Cookson, P. W. & Persell, C. H. (1985). *Preparing for power: America's elite boarding*

    schools. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Cooley, C. H. (1902/1964). *Human nature and the social order.* New York: Schocken.

Copp, M. (1998). When emotion work is doomed to fail: Ideological and structural

    constraints on emotion management. *Symbolic Interaction, 21*(3), 299-328.

Damasio, A. R. (1994). *Descartes' error: emotion, reason, and the human brain.* New

    York: Avon Books.

Day C., & Qing, G. (2009). Teacher emotions: Well being and effectiveness. In P. A.

    Schutz & M. Zembylas (Eds.), *Advances in teacher emotion research: The impact*

    on teachers' lives (pp. 15-32). Dordrecht: Springer.

deMarrais, K. (2004). Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience. In

    K. deMarrais & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of*

    inquiry in education and the social sciences (pp. 51-68). Mahwah, NJ:

    Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Denzin N. K. (1984). *On understanding emotion.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Dewey, J. (1902). *The child and the curriculum.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago

Press.

Downey, D. B., Von Hippel, P. T., & Hughes, M. (2008). Are "failing" schools really

   failing? Using seasonal comparison to evaluate school effectiveness. *Sociology of*

   Education, 81(3), 242–270.

Durkheim, E. (1961). *Moral Education.* New York, NY. The Free Press.

Dweck, C. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success.* New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

Fields, J., Copp, M., & Kleinman, S. (2006). Symbolic interactionism, inequality, and emotion.

   In J. E. Stets & J. A. Turner (Eds.), Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions (pp. 155-

   178). Dordrecht: Springer.

Fineman, S. (2000). *Understanding emotion at work.* London: Sage Publications.

Frenzel, A., Becker-Kurz, B., Pekrun, & R. Goetz, T. (2015). Teaching this class is driving me

   nuts!—Examining the person and context specificity of teacher emotions, *PloS One,*

   10(6), 1-15.

Frenzel, A. (2014). Teacher emotions. In R. Pekrun & L. Linnenbrink-Garcia (Eds.),

   International handbook of emotions in education (pp. 495-519). New York:

   Routledge.

Freudenberger, H. J. (1974). Staff burnout. *Journal of Social Issues, 30,* 159-165.

Gorski, P. (2007). The question of Class. *Teaching Tolerance, 31.* Retrieved from

   http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-31-spring-2007/feature/question-class

Grandey, A. A. (2003). When "the Show Must Go On": Surface acting and deep acting as

   determinants of emotional exhaustion and peer-rated service delivery. *Academy of*

   Management Journal, 46(1), 86-96.

Grissom, J. A. (2011). Can good principals keep teachers in disadvantaged schools?

Linking principal effectiveness to teacher satisfaction and turnover in hard-to-staff environments. *Teachers College Record, 113(11),* 2552–2585.

Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., & Rivkin, S. G. (2004). Why public schools lose teachers. *Journal of Human Resources, 39*(2), 326–354.

Hargreaves, A. (1998). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 14*(8), 835–854.

Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*(8), 811-826.

Hargreaves, A., & Tucker, E. (1991). Teaching and guilt: Exploring the feelings of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 7*(5/6), 491-505.

Hass, J. (1977). Learning real feelings: A study of ironworkers' reactions to fear and danger. *Work and Occupations, 4,* 147-170.

Hermanowicz, J. C. (2009). *Lives in science: How institutions affect academic careers.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: The commercialisation of human feeling.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Huberman, A. M. & Vandenberghe, R. (1999). Introduction—Burnout and the teaching profession. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 1-11). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). *Who controls teachers' work?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ingersoll, R., Merrill, L., & Stuckey, D. (2014). *Seven trends: the transformation of the teaching force, updated April 2014.* CPRE Report (#RR-80). Philadelphia:

Consortium for Policy Research in Education, University of Pennsylvania.

Jeffrey, B. & Woods, P. (1996.) Feeling deprofessionalized: the social construction of emotions during an OFSTED inspection. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 26*(3), 325-343.

Johnson, S. M. (1990). *Teachers at Work: Achieving Success in Our Schools.* New York: Basic Books.

Johnson, S. M., Kraft, M. A., & Papay, J. P. (2012). How context matters in high-need schools: The effects of teachers' working conditions on their professional satisfaction and their students' achievement. *Teachers College Record, 114*(10), 1-39.

Katz, D., & Kahn, R L. (1978). *The social psychology of organizations* (2nd ed). New York, NY: Wiley.

Kelchtermans, G. (2005). Teachers' emotions in educational reforms: Self-understanding, vulnerable commitment and micropolitical literacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education 21*, 995-1006.

Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Understanding diversity in times of performativity: Understanding teachers' emotional experiences of change. In P. A. Schutz & M. Zembylas (Eds.), *Advances in teacher emotion research: The impact on teachers' lives* (pp. 215-232). Dordrecht: Springer.

Kemper, T. D. (2000). Social models in the explanation of emotions. In M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), *Handbook of emotions* (2nd ed.) (pp. 45-58). New York: The Guilford Press.

Kvale, S. (1996). InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kyriacou, C. (2001). Teacher stress: directions for future research. *Educational Review, 53(1),* 27-35.

Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Leithwood, K. A., Menzies, T., Jantzi, D. & Leithwood, J. (1999). Teacher burnout: A critical challenge for leaders of restructuring schools. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 85-114). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Liljestrom, A., Roulston, K., & deMarrais, K. (2007). "There's no place for feeling like this in the workplace": Women teachers' anger in school settings. In P. Schutz & R. Pekrun (Eds.), *Emotion in education* (pp. 267-284). Amsterdam: Academic Press.

Little, J. W. (1996). The emotional contours and career trajectories of (disappointed) reform enthusiasts, *Cambridge Journal of Education, 26*(3), pp. 345-359.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Manning, P. K. (1977). *Police work: The social organization of policing.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Marshall and Ball (1999). Tales of fear and loathing: Teachers' work and recent educational reform. In M. Hammersley (Ed.), *Researching School Experience: Ethnographic studies of teaching and learning* (pp. 71-86). London: Falmer Press.

Martin, S. E. (1999). Police force or police service? Gender and emotional labor. *Annals*

of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 561, 111-126.

Maslach, C. & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Occupational Behavior, 2,* 99-113.

Maslach, C. & Leiter, M. P. (1999). Teacher burnout: A research agenda. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 295-303). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed). London: Sage Publications.

Mattingly, M. A. (1977). Sources of stress and burn-out in professional child care work. *Child Care Quarterly, 6(2),* 127-137.

McLaughlin, M. W. (1993). What matters most in teachers' workplace context? In J. W. Little & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teachers work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts* (pp. 79-103). New York and London: Teachers College Press.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self and Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nass, C. & Yen, C. (2010). *The man who lied to his laptop: What machines teach us about human relationships.* New York, NY: Penguin Group, Inc.

Nias, J. (1989). *Primary teachers talking: A study of teaching as work.* London & New York: Routledge.

Nias, J. (1991). Changing times, changing identities: Grieving for a lost self. In: Burgess, R. G. (Ed.), *Educational research and evaluation: For policy and practice.* London and New York: Falmer Press.

Nias, J. (1996). Thinking about feeling: the emotions in teaching. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 26*(3), 293–306.

Nias, J. (1999). Teachers' moral purposes: Stress, vulnerability, and strength. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp.223-237). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Connor, K. E. (2006). *"You choose to care": Teachers, emotions and professional identity.* Teaching and Teacher Education, 24, 117-126.

Ost, B. (2014). How do teachers improve? The relative importance of general and specific human capital. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, 6*(2), 127–151.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Pierce, J. L. (1995). *Gender trials: Emotional lives in contemporary law firms.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Prasad, P. (2005). *Crafting qualitative research: Working in the postpositivist traditions.* Armonk, NY & London, England: M. E. Sharpe.

Rafaeli, A. & Sutton, R. (1990). Busy stores and demanding customers: How do they affect the expression of positive emotion? *Academy of Management Journal, 33,* 623-637.

Raz, A. E. (1997). The slanted smile factory: Emotion management in Tokyo Disneyland. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction, 21,* 201-217.

Rich, M. (2015, January, 17). Percentage of poor students in public schools rises. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com

Richards, J. (2012). Teacher stress and coping strategies: A national snapshot. *The Educational Forum, 76,* 299-316.

Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(1), 4–36.

Rudow, B. (1999). Stress and burnout in the teaching profession: European studies, issues, and research perspectives. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 38-58). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scheff, T. J. (1988). Shame and conformity: The deference-emotion system. *American Sociology Review, 52,* 395-406.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed). New York: Teachers College Press.

Simon, N. S. & Johnson, S. M. (2015). Teacher turnover in high-poverty schools: What we know and can do. *Teachers College Record, 117,* 1-36.

Smylie, M. A. (1999). Teacher stress in a time of reform. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M. Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook of international research and practice* (pp. 59-84). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2016). *The Trump effect: The impact of the 2016 presidential election on our nation's schools.* Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/the_trump_effect.pdf

Stets, J. E. & Trettevik, R. (2014). Emotions in identity theory. In J. E. Stets & J. H. Turner (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of emotions: Volume II* (pp. 33-49). Dordrecht: Springer.

Strauss, A. & J. Corbin. (1998.) *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed). Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sutton, R. E. (2007). Teachers' anger, frustration, and self-regulation. In P. Schutz & R. Pekrun (Eds.). *Emotion in education* (pp. 259-274). Amsterdam: Academic Press.

Sutton, R. E. & Wheatley, K. F. (2003). Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review, 15,* 327-358.

Turner, J. H. & Stets, J. E. (2006). Sociological theories of human emotion. *Annual Review of Sociology, 32,* 25-52.

van den Berg, R. (2002). Teachers' meanings regarding educational practice. *Review of Educational Research, 72*(4), 577-625.

van Veen, K. & Sleegers, P. (2009). Teachers' emotions in a context of reforms: To a deeper understanding of teachers and reforms. In P. A. Schutz & M. Zembylas (Eds.), *Advances in teacher emotion research: The impact on teachers' lives* (pp. 233-252). Dordrecht: Springer.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Waller, W. (1932). *The sociology of teaching.* New York: Wiley.

Wang, G., Seibert, S. E., & Boles, T. L. (2011). Synthesizing what we know and looking ahead: A meta-analytical review of 30 years of emotional labor research. *Research on Emotion in Organizations, 7*, 15-43.

Weiss, R. S. (1990). *Staying the course: The emotional and social lives of men who do well at work.* New York: The Free Press.

Wharton, C. S. (1996). Making people feel good: Workers' constructions of meaning in

    interactive service jobs. *Qualitative sociology, 19* (2), 217-233.

Woods, P. (1989). Stress and the teacher role. In M. Cole & S. Walker (Eds.), *Teaching*

    and stress (pp. 84-97). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Woods, P. (1999). Intensification and stress in teaching. In R. Vandenberghe & A. M.

    Huberman (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing teacher burnout: A sourcebook*

    of international research and practice (pp. 115-138). Cambridge: Cambridge

    University Press.

Zapf, D., & Holz, M. (2006). On the positive and negative effects of emotion work in

    organizations. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 15*,

    1-28.

Zembylas, M. (2003). Emotions and teacher identity: A post-structural perspective. *Teachers and*

    Teaching: Theory and Practice, 9, 213-238.

APPENDIX A
Contact Letter to Teachers

January 1, 2016

Dear _____,

My name is Lauren Shumaker, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Theory and Practice at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research study on the work experiences of public elementary school teachers in partial fulfillment of my PhD, and I would like to invite you to participate.

This study presents a unique opportunity for you to help us understand how teachers experience their work and will contribute to strengthening teachers' voices in scholarly discussions about the profession. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for two interviews about your experiences of your work. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed on time and location and should last approximately 90 minutes. The interviews will be audio-recorded simply to allow me to accurately reflect on what is discussed, and all tapes will be destroyed once the study is completed.

The study holds real potential to generate important findings about how teaching elementary school is experienced and understood by teachers themselves. The interviews will consist of questions about how you experience and manage your work in everyday school settings. Participation and all interview material will be strictly confidential. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity and the identity of your school will be concealed. Pseudonyms will be used and other identifying information such as grade level(s) and location(s) may be changed to protect your identity in published work.

I very much hope you can participate; the success of the work depends on teachers like you. All aspects of this project have passed the usual human subjects reviews at the University of Georgia. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the phone number or email listed below and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. This research is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Ajay Sharma, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Theory and Practice, University of Georgia. If you have any questions your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Human Subjects Office at the University of Georgia at 706-_____.

Please know how greatly I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lauren E. Shumaker
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Theory and Practice
University of Georgia
Phone: _____; Email: _____

APPENDIX B
Teacher Recruitment Phone Script

Part I: Introduction and Explanation of Study

Researcher: Hi, my name is Lauren Shumaker, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Theory and Practice at the University of Georgia. I am conducting a research study on the work experiences of public elementary school teachers in partial fulfillment of my PhD, and I would like to invite you to participate.

This study presents a unique opportunity for you to help us understand how teachers experience their work and will contribute to strengthening teachers' voices in scholarly discussions about the profession. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for two interviews about your experiences of your work. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed on time and location and should last approximately 90 minutes. The interviews will be audio-recorded simply to allow me to accurately reflect on what is discussed, and all tapes will be destroyed once the study is completed.

The study holds real potential to generate important findings about how teaching elementary school is experienced and understood by teachers themselves. The interviews will consist of questions about how you experience and manage your work in everyday school settings. Participation and all interview material will be strictly confidential. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity and the identity of your school will be concealed. Pseudonyms will be used and other identifying information such as dates, grade levels and locations may be changed to protect your identity in published work.

I very much hope you can participate; the success of the work depends on teachers like you. This research is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Ajay Sharma, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Theory and Practice, University of Georgia. All aspects of this project have passed the usual human subjects reviews at the University of Georgia.

Part II: Participation

Would you be interested in participating in this study?
Yes: _____
No: _____

[If no] Thank you for your consideration. I appreciate your time.
[TERMINATE PHONE CALL.]

[If yes] Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Are there any questions about the study I can answer for you at this time?

Part III: Scheduling the Interview

What would be a convenient date, time and location for our interview to take place?

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

[If researcher is available at date/time specified] I am available on _____ (date) at _____ (time). I will meet you at _____ (location).

 [If researcher is not available at date/time specified] I am afraid I will not be able to meet you on _____ (date) at _____ (time). Is there another _____ (day/time) when you might be available?

2nd Date: _____

2nd Time: _____

2nd Location: _____

[Repeat above question until an interview date, time and location are scheduled.]

IV. Preferred Method of Contact and Contact Information

What is the best way for me to contact you to confirm our scheduled interview? _____ (teacher's contact preference)

Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions about the study or if you need to reschedule our interview. My phone number is _____ and my email address is _____. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. If you have any questions your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Human Subjects Office at the University of Georgia at 706-_____.

Thank you and I look forward to our interview.

[TERMINATE PHONE CALL.]

APPENDIX C
Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study about the work experiences of Title I elementary school teachers. The purpose of this study is to examine how public elementary school teachers experience and manage their work in everyday school settings. To participate in this study, you must currently work in a public elementary school or have worked in a public elementary school within the last year.

Your participation will involve an individual interview and the completion of a short post-interview questionnaire. The individual interview will last approximately 90 minutes, and the questionnaire will only take a couple of minutes to complete. Your involvement in the study is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your participation in this research study will not affect your employment status. The sessions will be audio-recorded simply to provide an accurate reflection of what is discussed. All tapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Only the members of the research team will have access to the recordings and, when not in use, they will be kept in a locked cabinet until they are destroyed. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential unless required by law. No participants will experience physical harm while participating in this study. There is a risk that you may be asked to recall sensitive information in the interviews that elicits uncomfortable feelings. You are free to decline to answer any question asked.

The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity and the identity of your school will be kept confidential and will not be associated with your responses in any published format. Pseudonyms will be used and other identifying information such as dates, grade levels and locations may be changed to protect your identity in published work.
While there is no direct benefit to you, participation will contribute to advancing the understanding of how public elementary school teachers experience and manage their work in everyday school settings.

This research is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Ajay Sharma, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Theory and Practice, University of Georgia. The investigators will answer any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. If you have any further questions about this research project after your completion of participation, please feel free to email Dr. Sharma (_____) at any time.

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project.

Name of Researcher: Lauren E. Shumaker   _____   _____
                                                    Signature   **Date**

_____   _____   _____
       Name of Participant   **Signature**   **Date**

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, Telephone: 706-_____;
E-Mail Address: _____

APPENDIX D
Interview Guide

This is a study about the experiences of public elementary school teachers. The questions I would like to talk about deal with how public elementary school teachers experience and manage their work in everyday school settings. Some of the things I will discuss ask you to make personal judgments and reflect on your feelings in various professional situations. Your participation in this study is strictly confidential. Interviews are typically tape-recorded, and this simply provides for accurately keeping track of information. Following the conclusion of the study, all tapes will be destroyed.

Your participation in this project is important. Your responses will help us understand how teachers experience their work and will contribute to strengthening teachers' voices in scholarly discussions about the profession. However, you are free to withdraw at any time, and you are free not to answer questions if you prefer.

Please understand that I am not looking for any right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding the experience of teaching from the perspective of teachers such as yourself. Please speak candidly, and feel free to express yourself in as much detail as you can, but please do not name any individuals in your responses so that you do not unintentionally identify someone. You should also feel free to ask me questions concerning the interview or the study. May we begin?

Background, Emotional Experiences and Coping

1. How did you come to be a teacher?
2. How did you come to teach in this school?
3. How do you feel about teaching here?

4. What experiences bring you the most joy as a teacher?
5. Can you walk me through a recent time when you found yourself enjoying your work?
6. What do you find gratifying about your work?
   Probe: Could you walk me through a recent time when you felt such gratification?
7. Have the joys and gratifications of being a teacher changed over time for you?
   Probe: [If yes] How?
         [If no] Why do you think that is?

8. What frustrates you about your work?
   Probe: Could you walk me through the last time you experienced frustration in your
         work?
(9.) What worries or concerns you about your work?
   Probe: Can you walk me through the last time you felt worried about work?
(10.) What do you find overwhelming in your work?
   Probe: Can you walk me through a recent time you felt overwhelmed as a teacher?
         What was going through your mind?
         What were you feeling?

       Did you share these feelings with anyone?

       What did you let others see?

11. Are there things you tell yourself or mental exercises you put yourself through when you walk into work each morning?

12. How much is work on your mind when you are away from school?

13. Do you talk about your work with others when you are away from school?

    Probe: With whom?

14. Has the amount of time you spend on work when you are away from school changed over your career?

    Probe: [If yes] In what ways?

           [If no] Why do you think that is?

Relationships with Others

15. *Administrators*

a. Can you tell me about the last time an administrator responded positively to your work?

    Probe: What was special about that interaction?

b. Can you describe the last time you disagreed with an administrative decision or policy?

c. Has the way you interact with administrators changed over your career?

d. Has what you allow administrators see of your feelings changed over time in your career?

16. *Colleagues*

a. Can you walk me through the last time you turned to a colleague for support?

b. What about the last time a colleague came *to you* for support?

17. *Students*

a. Can you describe the last positive interaction you had with a student or group of students?

b. Can you walk me through the last time a student or group of students really got to you?

Final Questions

18. If you could give yourself advice about teaching when you were at the very beginning your career, what would that advice be?

19. What has been the greatest surprise to you about your work?

20. What do you think is the biggest misconception about teaching?

22. Have you ever considered changing schools or school districts?

    Probe: [If yes] What kind of school/school district would you choose to work in?

           [If no] Why do you think that is?

8. What keeps you here?

9. Knowing what you know now, would you go into teaching again if starting all over?

    Probe: Why?/Why not?

12. I would finally like to ask you about something you are most proud of in your work. What stands out as having left a strong positive impression on you?

APPENDIX E
Post-Interview Questionnaire

1. Birth year: _____

2. Racial/ethnic background: _____

3. Highest education degree attained:
   ( ) Bachelor's degree
   ( ) Master's degree
   ( ) Specialist degree
   ( ) PhD

4. What was your undergraduate major? _____

5. Including this year, how many years you have taught elementary school? _____ years

6. Including this year, how many years have you taught in your current school district? _____years

7. Including this year, how many years have you taught at your current school? _____ years

APPENDIX F
Thank You Letter to Teachers

January 5, 2016

Dear _____,

Having recently completed our interview, I want to take the opportunity to thank you for your help with my study. Your kindness and generosity in your time and your insight into teaching, especially your capacity to express how it feels and what it means to be a teacher, means a great deal to me and to the work it will form.

If you have any questions or want to get in touch with me, you should feel free to do so at any time. My phone number and email address are listed below.

As you know, this project has passed the usual human subjects reviews. Should you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact me or the Human Subjects Office at the University of Georgia (phone: _____; email: _____).

Please accept my many thanks for all the help you have given, and my best wishes for the months and years to come.

Sincerely,

Lauren E. Shumaker
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Theory and Practice
University of Georgia
Phone: _____
Email: _____