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# Mixed emotions: teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students

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**Abstract**

This paper describes the conceptual framework, methodology, and some results from a project on the Emotions of Teaching and Educational Change. It introduces the concepts of emotional intelligence, emotional labor, emotional understanding and emotional geographies. Drawing on interviews with 53 teachers in 15 schools, the paper then describes key differences in the emotional geographies of elementary and secondary teaching. Elementary teaching is characterized by physical and professional closeness which creates greater emotional intensity; but in ambivalent conditions of classroom power, where intensity is sometimes negative. Secondary teaching is characterized by greater professional and physical distance leading teachers to treat emotions as intrusions in the classroom. This distance, the paper argues, threatens the basic forms of emotional understanding on which high-quality teaching and learning depend. 

*Keywords:* Emotions of teaching; Elementary teachers; Secondary teachers

## 1. Introduction

This paper and the two that follow arise primarily from a study funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, on the emotions of teaching and educational change. Here, through intensive interviews with 53 elementary and secondary teachers in 15 schools, as well as involvement in a teacher discussion group lasting several sessions, a team of graduate students and I have been investigating teachers' emotional responses to educational change; the emotional nature of their interactions with students, parents, school leaders and each other; and how the ways they experience and express their emotionality in their teaching and their life vary according to their gender, their ethnocultural identity, and the stage of life and career where they find themselves.

This first paper begins by highlighting the importance of the emotions as a field of inquiry for deepening our understanding of the nature, conditions and consequences of teaching, learning and leading in schools today. It points to the disturbing neglect of the emotional dimension in the increasingly rationalized world of educational reform. At the same time, the paper highlights the risks of embracing emotion in indulgent and romanticized ways that might divert us from critical engagement with this process of rationalization. Four key

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concepts are introduced—emotional intelligence, emotional labor, emotional understanding and emotional geographies—along with their relevance (or not) to our own investigation and approach. The paper then describes the methodology of the study and an associated one, on which we draw and discusses some of the challenges of investigating emotion more generally. Finally, some of the results of the study (and the accompanying one) are introduced in terms of teachers' perceptions of the emotional aspects of their interactions with students.

## 2. Conceptual framework

Emotions are an integral part of education and of organizations more generally. Teachers, learners and leaders all, at various times, worry, hope, enthuse, become bored, doubt, envy, brood, love, feel proud, get anxious, are despondent, become frustrated, and so on. Such emotions are not peripheral to people's lives; nor can they be compartmentalized away from action or from rational reflection within these lives. Emotion, cognition and action, in fact, are integrally connected. Emotion and impulse narrow down the infinite range of choices we have in human action—enabling us to choose, to judge, to act, by introducing a bias in the values and preferences that guide us (Oatley, 1991). Judgement, in this sense, is enhanced by feeling and passion rather than by taking an entirely dispassionate stance (Damasio, 1994). Similarly, cognitive reflection can help us guide and moderate our emotions—and sometimes even wilfully move us into another emotional state by deciding to brood or cheer ourselves up (Goleman, 1995). In this sense, teaching, learning and leading are (like many other activities involving human interaction) all what Denzin (1984) calls emotional practices—in that they arouse and color feelings in ourselves and in those around us. As emotional practitioners, teachers can make classrooms exciting or dull and leaders can turn colleagues into risk-takers or cynics. Teaching, learning and leading may not be solely emotional practices, but they are always *irretrievably* emotional in character, in a good way or a bad way, by design or default.

Educational policy and administration, and most of the educational research community pay little or no attention to the emotions. What is at stake for them are increasingly rationalized, cognitively driven and behavioral priorities of knowledge, skill, standards, targets, performance, management, planning, problem-solving, accountability, decision-making, and measurable results (Hargreaves, 1997). Until recently, organizational theory has paid little attention to the emotions either—and where it has, as in the human relations school of management theory, this has been directed more towards managing and manipulating others' emotions for the organization's good, rather than acknowledging and engaging with one's own emotions, or with the more emotionally unsettling aspects of organizational life in general (Fineman, 1993).

Now, giving more prominence to emotion in the practice and study of organizations, including educational ones, is not necessarily better. Indeed, overly indulging the personal, emotional and spiritual aspects of teaching and leading can too easily distract people from the ways in which their work is being rationalized, reduced and reorganized all around them (Hargreaves, 1996). Stephan Mestrovic argues that it is precisely when our world is becoming increasingly rationalized, disenchanted, bureaucratic and ordered around market relations that there is a surge of what he calls postemotionalism, or "artificially contrived authenticity" (Mestrovic, 1997, p. 80) where symbolic attempts are made to re-enchant our profoundly disenchanted world with emotional "spin", kitsch and a Disneyesque culture of 'niceness' (see also Retzer, 1998). Hartley (1999) claims that these postemotional emphases or moves towards symbolic (not substantive) re-enchantment are also evident in schooling. One example might be England's televised Teacher-of-the-Year awards, where, in the context of a profession that is more tightly regulated and regimented than ever (in terms of scripted pedagogical performance in numeracy and literacy hours), glitzy ceremonies urge an outpouring of positive emotion towards outstanding teachers. With Academy Award production values, prizes presented by media and sports celebrities, and a choir of schoolchildren singing "I believe I can fly, I believe I can touch the sky", there could be few better examples of postemotional excess.

More emotion is not always better, then. It can act as an indulgence and a diversion. In schools themselves, excessive emphasis on emotional caring for poor and marginalized students can also condemn them to a warm yet "welfarist" culture, where immediate comfort that makes school a haven for children can easily occlude the long-term achievement goals and expectations that are essential if children are to make their escape permanent (Hargreaves, 1995). Moreover, in the classroom, excessive emotional emphasis can also support ideological manipulation—developing passionate attachments without critical engagement. Mussolini's education minister, for example, boasted that from Italy's progressive (and emotionally orientated) schools would issue its fascist citizens of the future (Entwistle, 1979).

Given that teaching, learning and leading are emotional practices, it is important to engage with the emotional arena in education; it is also important to do so critically and not sentimentally or self-indulgently. As we shall see in the ensuing empirical part of this paper, we should not only acknowledge or celebrate the emotional attachments that many elementary teachers have with their students—attachments that are equally as important as performance standards or achievement results—but we should also investigate the nature of those attachments and critique them where necessary.

In recent years there have been efforts to remedy the neglect of emotion in the fields of teaching and teacher development. This work highlights the virtues of caring (Noddings, 1992; Acker, 1992; Elbaz, 1992), passionate (Freid, 1995), thoughtful (Clark, 1995), and tactful (van Manen, 1995) teaching. It also points to the importance of cultivating greater hope (Fullan, 1997), attentiveness (Elbaz, 1992) and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Fullan, 1999; Day, 1998) among teachers, and to the significance of emotionality in particular areas of the curriculum such as arts education (e.g. Eisner, 1986). One important body of work also points to the psychodynamic underpinnings of teaching (Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry, & Osborne, 1983) and leading (Loader, 1997), highlighting how early family dynamics, and unarticulated fantasies and fears can drive teachers' classroom behavior and influence how leaders lead. This literature, however, generally tends to represent teachers' emotions and emotionality in personal, psychological and individual terms. Being tactful, caring or passionate as a teacher is treated as largely a matter of personal disposition, moral commitment or private virtue, rather than of how particular ways of organizing teaching shape teachers' emotional experiences.

We have taken a more social-constructionist and contextualized view of emotion in our own work. Drawing on social psychology, symbolic interactionism, occupational sociology, feminist theory and postmodern geography, we have sought to understand and explain the ways that emotions exist between people, like the Japanese concept of self, in interactions and relationships rather than within them as disembodied individuals. We have therefore investigated how the emotional character of teaching is influenced and shaped by teachers' lives and identities on the one hand, and the changing conditions of their work on the other.

A few studies do already explore the emotional "underlife" of teaching in relation to the adverse emotional effects on teachers of high-stakes inspection processes (Jeffrey & Woods, 1996), stress-inducing reform strategies (Dinham & Scott, 1997; Troman & Woods, forthcoming; Woods, Jeffrey, Troman, & Boyle, 1997; Nias, 1991; Blackmore, 1996), the risks of collaborative teacher research (Dadds, 1993), authoritarian leadership styles (Blase & Anderson, 1995) and the general speeding-up, intensification and extensification (spreading out) of teachers' work (Hargreaves, 1994). Beyond these specific studies, however, we have no systematic understanding of how teachers' emotions are shaped by the variable and changing conditions of their work; nor of how these emotions are manifested in teachers' interactions with students, parents, administrators and each other. Our research therefore builds on, sometimes reacts to, and attempts to integrate several key concepts that are influential in the emotions field, and adds a fourth of our own—as a way of establishing a framework for interpreting our data.

### 2.1. Emotional intelligence

The importance of emotions in organizations has been most widely highlighted and popularized

through the ideas of emotional competence, emotional literacy and emotional intelligence. Being able to master the five basic emotional competences described by Goleman (1995, 1998)—knowing how to express one's emotions, manage one's moods, empathize with the emotional states of others, motivate oneself and others, and exercise a wide range of social skills—are indeed essential for being highly effective as a teacher or leader. But this is not only a matter of personal choice or individual skill development. Emotions should not be reduced to technical competences. Indeed, Boler (1999) criticizes Goleman's view of emotional intelligence and argues that presenting emotion management as just another set of skills to be mastered, in which people can be trained, limits how we approach, understand and try to shape the emotional work that people do.

Emotional intelligence, Boler argues, "casts the social self in entirely individualistic terms" in relation to how individuals can manage or control undesirable emotions or augment and acquire more desirable ones (Boler, 1999, p. 63). Moreover, the idea of emotional intelligence falsely universalizes emotional competences such as optimism and empathy and ignores "how people are taught different rules of conduct for emotional behavior according to their gendered, racialized and social class status" (p. 61). Managing one's moods is quite different depending on whether the person concerned is, say, Chilean or Germanic Swiss!

Despite the attractions of emotional intelligence theory for some researchers in the area of teacher development (where it offers another set of trainable competences) (Fullan, 1993; Day, 1999), we are interested in an understanding of human emotion that acknowledges culturally different forms of emotionality, and that embeds emotion in the politically contested interactions of organizational life.

### 2.2. Emotional labor

Many jobs involving interactions with others call on workers to manufacture or mask their emotions on many occasions. The polite waitress, enthusiastic salesman, solicitous undertaker or irritated debt collector are all expressions of this phenomenon. Teachers manufacture and mask their emotions too—when they enthuse about a new initiative, are overjoyed with a student's breakthrough, show patience with a frustrating colleague, or are calm in the face of parental criticism. Is this an expression of emotional intelligence—of the ability to manage one's moods? Or does it mean that teachers' emotions are somehow artificial or inauthentic—that teachers are just acting, and not in tune with their selves? The key point is that in either case, emotions do not always arise spontaneously or naturally. Creating and sustaining a dynamic, engaging lesson, for example, requires hard emotional work, investment, or labor. So too does remaining calm and unruffled when confronted by threatening student behavior.

The idea of emotional labor is different from and in some ways diametrically opposed to the idea of emotional intelligence. Managing one's moods represents the highest form of competence for Goleman, whereas for Hochschild (1983) in her classic text on emotional labor, it involves selling out the emotional self to the purposes and profits of the organization—a smile for a sale, or sycophantic praise to head off the boss's criticism.

Yet, at its best, emotional labor in teaching (and other occupations) can be pleasurable and rewarding—when people are able to pursue their own purposes through it, and when they work in conditions that allow them to do their jobs well (Oatley, 1991; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). At times like these, emotional labor is at the heart of the passion to teach (Freid, 1996). But as Hochschild (1983) shows, emotional labor becomes negative and draining when people feel they are masking or manufacturing their emotions to suit the purposes of others (Stenross & Kleinman, 1989), or when poor working conditions make it impossible for them to perform their work well.

In education, Blackmore (1996) has shown how women principals who work in repressive policy environments can become what she calls emotional middle-managers of educational reform—leaders who motivate their staffs to implement or make the best of the impractical and unpalatable policies of government, and who lose something of themselves, their health and their personal relationships in the process. In these sorts of circumstances, the

emotional labor of teaching and leading becomes a highly political matter.

In our own work, we have found that teachers largely enjoy the emotional labor of working with students because this meets their core classroom purposes in circumstances that they largely control. Here, when they mask and manage emotions around students, teachers say, they do so for the students' benefit. But teachers dislike the emotional labor of working with parents who they regard as more peripheral to their work but with whom they are in a more ambivalent relationship of power (Lasky, 2000). When teachers mask and manage their emotions in these cases, they do so, they say, for their own benefit, to protect themselves against criticism and hostility (Hargreaves, 2000; Hargreaves et al., in press).

### 2.3. Emotional understanding

How people *are* emotionally is shaped by the emotional experiences they have developed within their culture, through their upbringing and in their relationships with those around them. Organizations and workplaces are prime sites in which adults experience and learn to express their emotions in particular ways. Central to this cultural dimension of emotions is the idea of emotional understanding—and of how people develop or fail to develop it with their clients and associates.

Denzin (1984) argues that *emotional understanding* does not take place like cognitive understanding in a linear, step-by-step way.[1] Instead, emotional understanding occurs instantaneously, at a glance, as people reach down into their past emotional experiences and "read" the emotional responses of those around them. Teachers scan their students all the time, for example, checking their appearances of engagement, or responsiveness.

When teachers' emotional scanning goes awry, however, what they actually experience is emotional *misunderstanding*—they think they know what their students are feeling, but are completely wrong (Hargreaves, 1998a). Students who seem studious are actually bored; ones who appear hostile are really embarrassed or ashamed that they cannot succeed! Because emotional misunderstanding leads teachers to misread their students' learning, it seriously threatens learning standards. In this sense, emotion as well as cognition, is foundational to the standards agenda.

Importantly, emotional engagement and understanding in schools (as elsewhere) require strong, continuous relationships between teachers and students so they learn to "read" each other over time. Yet, this is just what detailed standards frameworks and complex school structures can easily threaten. They can create a frenetic pace of teaching that allows no time for relationships and understandings to develop (Gutierrez, 2000), and that reinforces a subject-centred organization of schooling which makes integration difficult and fragments the interactions between teachers and the excessive number of students they are required to teach. In this sense, emotional understanding in schools is either fostered or frustrated by school structures and priorities.

### 2.4. Emotional geographies

Emotional understanding and misunderstanding in teaching result from what we term *emotional geographies* of schooling and human interaction. These consist of the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and color the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other. (Hargreaves, 2000, p.7)

The concept of emotional geographies helps us identify the supports for and threats to the basic emotional bonds and understandings of schooling that arise from forms of distance or closeness in people's interactions or relationships. Our analysis of data from the emotions projects points to five forms of emotional distance and closeness that can threaten emotional understanding among teachers, students, colleagues and parents (Hargreaves, 2000).

[1] For an elaboration of Denzin's (1984) concepts of emotional understanding and emotional misunderstanding applied to teachers within an overall theory of teaching and the emotions; see Hargreaves (2000).

- *sociocultural geographies*—where differences of culture and class can all too easily make teachers on the one hand and parents and students on the other, alien and unknowable to each other (Bernhard, 1999).
- *moral geographies*—where teachers' purposes are at odds with those they serve and where there are no mechanisms to discuss or resolve these differences (Oatley & Jenkins, 1996).
- *professional geographies*—where teacher professionalism is defined according to a 'classical', masculine model of the professions, that creates a distance between teachers and the clients they serve, and that is especially prejudicial to feminine, 'caring' ethics of teaching (Grumet, 1988).
- *political geographies*—where hierarchical power relationships distort the emotional as well as cognitive aspects of communication between teachers and those around them (Blase & Anderson, 1995).
- *physical geographies*—where fragmented, infrequent, formalized and episodic encounters replace the possibility of relationships between teachers and students, or teachers and parents (especially in secondary schools) with strings of disconnected interactions (Lasky, 2000).

How these emotional geographies of teaching are configured is basic to the possibilities of developing the kinds of emotional understanding that are integral to high standards of teaching and learning, good colleagueship, and effective partnerships with parents.

## 3. Methodology

The data on which this paper and the following ones are based largely draw from a study of the emotions of teaching and educational change which comprised interviews with 60 teachers in a range of elementary and secondary schools in the province of Ontario in Canada. The sample was distributed across 15 varied schools of different levels and sizes, serving different kinds of communities (i.e. urban, rural, suburban). In each school, we asked principals to identify a sample of four teachers that included the oldest and youngest teachers in the school, was gender mixed, contained teachers with different orientations to change, represented a range of subject specializations (within secondary schools), and (where possible) included at least one teacher from an ethnocultural minority. Seven of the interviews were either technically untranscribable or were mislaid in the transition between project coordinators, leaving a final total of 53.

The interviews lasted for 1–1.5 h and concentrated on eliciting teachers' reports of their emotional relationships to their work, their professional development, their lives and identities and educational change. A substantial part of the interview drew on methodological procedures used by Hochschild (1983) in her key text on the sociology of emotion, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling*. It asked teachers to describe particular episodes of positive and negative emotion (one of each) with students, colleagues, administrators and parents, respectively (i.e. 8 episodes in total). The remainder of this paper is largely based on one category of teachers' reports about significant emotional episodes involving interactions with students. While one-time interviews have limitations as ways of getting others to access and disclose their own emotions (and we have therefore complemented our methodology with longer-term discussion groups), they do surface new topics and themes in previously unexplored areas, and they enable initial patterns and variations in teachers' emotions to be identified across different school contexts, and different kinds of teachers. Also, while reliance on critical episodes cannot verify overall frequencies of emotional reactions and experiences, they do highlight what teachers find emotionally significant and compelling in their work.

In relation to the analysis in the present paper, about 30 teachers gave direct and reasonably extensive responses to the question concerning emotional episodes with students.[2] On "negative" incidents, 16 secondary teachers provided usable

[2] Other teachers responded to these questions elsewhere in the interview—and their responses are currently under analysis—or provided answers that were too vague for meaningful categorization.

responses (6 men, 10 women; 6 over 40 years of age, 10 under). On "positive" incidents, the secondary sample was almost the same with two teachers excluded and two new ones included in the responses (i.e. 4 men, 12 women; 8 over 40, 12 under). In the elementary teachers sample, 14 teachers responded usably to "negative" incidents (5 men, 9 women; 8 over 40, 6 under), and 15 to "positive" incidents (5 men, 10 women; 8 over 40, 7 under). For the sake of brevity, their responses are mainly analyzed in narrative form, in preference to providing longer quotations.

The interviews were analyzed inductively with the assistance of the computer program *Folio Views*. Data were extracted electronically, then marked, coded and grouped into increasingly larger themes, ensuring that all identified pieces of data were accounted for and included in the framework. While, in our overall analysis, we have analyzed teachers' emotions by level of teaching (elementary/secondary), by identity attributes (gender, ethnocultural, etc.), and by role (e.g. department head), we have not analyzed the data school by school since our experience in other projects is that single digit sample sizes of teachers (especially as small as 3 or 4) are insufficiently representative, particularly in the case of larger secondary schools.

This paper and the one by Schmidt (in this volume) also draw to some degree on a second study. In an ongoing improvement project with four secondary schools in a large metropolitan district, in Ontario, Canada, my colleagues and I collected baseline interview data (with interviews lasting around 1 h) with up to 12 teachers in each school. These interviews included questions regarding teachers' sources of satisfaction and also how teachers attended to the emotional needs of and their emotional interactions with students and colleagues. Data were again transcribed, sorted by hand and analyzed thematically. Schmidt's paper draws on interviews with department heads in all four schools, while the present paper focuses on teachers in one of the schools which had once served a small village on the edge of the city, but in recent years had been surrounded by new housing development and the influx of a much more visibly diverse student population. The students had changed, but the staff had remained largely the same, with a mean age in the late 40s that was reflected in the composition of the sample.

Having outlined the conceptual framework and methodological design for the overall study as a background to these three papers together, I will now turn to the data on teachers' reports of their emotional episodes and encounters with students—first in elementary schools, then in secondary schools.

## 4. Elementary teachers

Studies of teacher satisfaction repeatedly show that teachers' most important rewards are gained from students in the classroom (e.g. Nias, 1989; Dinham & Scott, 1997). Elementary teachers, especially, claim not only to have affection for students but, in some cases, even to love them (Nias, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994). These are what Lortie (1975) called the "psychic rewards" of teaching which "rotate around classroom events and relationships with students; the cathexis of classroom life underlies much of what teachers feel about their work" (p. 187). Teachers feel rewarded when students show affection towards and regard for them and when students demonstrate that they are enjoying (or have enjoyed) their learning. Receiving such affection tells teachers they are achieving their purposes (p. 120).

Many elementary (primary) teachers secure their psychic rewards by establishing close emotional bonds or emotional understanding with their students as a foundation for teaching and learning. Woods and Jeffrey (1996, p. 71) describe how the especially "creative" primary teachers they chose to study in England.

> work affectively to be more effective in the learning situation. They generate relationships that feature excitement, interest, enthusiasm, inquiry … discovery, risk-taking and fun …. The cognitive 'scaffolding' is held together with emotional bonds.

In an earlier study of leading edge Grade 7 and 8 teachers, my colleagues and I found that the

emotional and social purposes or goals that teachers had for students, and the emotional bonds and understandings that teachers established with them, underpinned virtually everything else teachers did (Hargreaves, 1998b; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, in press)—their preferences for core-grouping structures that enabled them to "roll" with the projects and "go with the flow" in their classes, following the momentum of interest and learning; and their preference for "looping" or following their students from one grade to the next "because you know them so well, you know their moods" and their families, and "can start right in there with them".

Lortie's (1975) classic study of *Schoolteacher* pointed to three ways in which teachers gained psychic rewards from working with students—gratifying graduates who came back to thank their teachers, public performances and celebrations, and spectacular successes with individual students. In our study, only the third of these was sustained by the analysis of expressed positive emotion among teachers with regard to students. Spectacular individual cases of difficult or demanding students whom teachers had managed to turn around against the odds were easily the most frequently cited sources of positive emotion among secondary teachers (half the teacher sample who, interestingly, were all women, in mid-to-late career) and among seven of the elementary teachers. Across the two sectors, these cases included:teaching a very disadvantaged student useful lifeskills; helping a difficult student through a risky but successful drama production; giving a previously underachieving student the rare accolade of a perfect mark; encouraging students to take responsibility for solving a major classroom problem and seeing them succeed at it; being perceptive enough to identify a student with a learning disability and then successfully modifying their learning for them; watching a diffident student spread her wings and decide, after much vacillation, to leave school for university; making a kindergarten child stick at learning to write his name and seeing his pleasure at achieving it; seeing students benefit from perseverance; motivating an insecure less able child to achieve in mathematics; and, after considerable consultation with parents and a social worker, successfully incorporating a child who had been sexually abused into a class on sexual abuse—to the point where her mature contribution influenced the rest of the class. As in Lortie's study, it seems, while teachers expend their energies on their classes, they continue to invest their hopes in individuals.

Interestingly, a source of positive emotion among elementary teachers (7 mentions, compared to just 3 at the secondary level) that was not so evident in Lortie's study was the satisfaction that teachers gained from strong and rewarding classroom relationships. Elementary classrooms came across as being more intense than secondary ones. All the positive emotional incidents cited by the study's elementary teachers were rooted in the classroom. Teachers valued being missed by their students when they were absent; being their students' favorite teacher; having small groups of older students voluntarily accompany them to work with kindergarten classes; being loved by students; enjoying humour and informality with them; and creating an overall atmosphere in which they experienced lots of "warm fuzzies" with their classes! This suggests that compared to the time of Lortie's study, elementary teachers today may derive more positive emotions and psychic rewards from their immediate and not just deferred, relationships with their classes (as whole groups, and not just as individuals). The psychic rewards and satisfactions of elementary teaching seem, in other words, to come today not just from fleeting and often deferred feedback from individuals, or from success with a few exceptions, but from emotional bonds and emotional understanding established here-and-now with entire groups.

Yet, if classroom relationships were more valued as a source of positive emotion among elementary teachers, this does not mean that elementary teaching was consistently characterized by care, hope, attentiveness and other positive qualities (e.g. Elbaz, 1990). Compared to their secondary school colleagues, elementary teachers in our study came across as not only more emotionally positive in the classroom but as more emotionally negative as well. Their classrooms were more emotionally intense in both respects. For example, while, as we shall see, only secondary teachers complained of not being acknowledged or known by their

students, at least four elementary teachers mentioned times when their students actively disliked them. In these instances, students lacked courtesy; they mimicked and 'parrotted' the teacher's words in front of other children; they publicly lost faith in their teacher's coaching ability; or they boldly told their teacher they hated her.

Because elementary schools are places where there are greater differences between teachers and students in age, physical size and strategic sophistication, elementary teachers possess more classroom power than their secondary colleagues, as well as showing more care. The emotional geography of political distance can undermine the emotional understanding between them, even though and perhaps because the interactions between them are frequent, close and intense. This power may not usually be explicit and may linger under the surface much more than in secondary teaching, where student behavior is negotiated more overtly between teachers and students. However, despite or perhaps because of its more subterranean nature, teachers' power is an insistent feature of elementary school life (see also Hargreaves, 1994).

This is illustrated in our data on anger. Elementary teachers described more incidents of being angry about or with their students than secondary teachers did (7 compared to 4). They also felt frustrated with their students more often (8 incidents compared to 5). Elementary teachers got angry with students they tried to help but who refused to work hard and cooperate and whose "attitudes stink"; with a student who insisted on doing "their own thing" and not conforming with classroom rules that applied to the rest; with a student who complained that things were boring after all the efforts the teacher had made to take her class to an Art gallery; with the student who mocked and 'parrotted' the teacher in front of other children; with difficult students who "refuse to do their part" when many teachers are giving their best efforts on their behalf; with a 5-year old student who hated her teacher and said she wished she would die; or with one boy who refused to go to the principal as instructed with the effect that "you can't help but get angry and agitated when those kinds of things happen". Anger, in other words, arose when students defied their teachers, showed them up in front of others, or failed to appreciate or respond to their efforts when teachers had gone the extra mile for them.

Interestingly, contrary to the literature on gender and emotion, which argues that women are less likely to express or articulate anger than men (tending to internalize their anger in depression or self-disappointment instead), female teachers were no less likely than male ones to express anger regarding their students in this study (e.g. Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Berton, 1992). This slightly surprising finding may be explained by the fact that while in society as a whole women more usually occupy subordinate positions within relations of power, in elementary school classrooms the opposite is true. In his research on emotions and power, Kemper (1995) shows that anger is more likely when the target of a person's anger is not in a position to threaten them, retaliate or otherwise do them harm—to respond to wrath with vengeance. Compared to their secondary school counterparts, within their classrooms at least, elementary teachers are ensconced more firmly in this micropolitically superior position. Further empirical support for this argument can be found in the fact that elementary teachers, especially older ones, were even more likely than their secondary colleagues to express negative emotion in relation to problems of student behavior (11 teachers compared to 7).

## 5. Secondary teachers

Among secondary teachers, as we have seen, positive emotion for teachers came from achieving breakthroughs with individuals. Only two teachers cited "gratifying graduates" who returned to thank teachers for their efforts as a source of positive emotion. Yet six other teachers at the secondary level mentioned displays of acknowledgement, respect, appreciation and gratitude that were much more direct, and less deferred than in Lortie's study. These teachers appreciated it when students regularly said "hello" to them in the corridors and showed they liked them; when they thanked teachers and brought them presents for doing something special like allowing students to bake during an English class; when they were respected

by senior students in another role such as athletics outside the classroom, even when their relationship had been at loggerheads within it; or when students spontaneously showed they would miss their departing teachers, for example in posters that communicated the fact. Importantly, though, this gratitude was not usually deferred until students had left school, but was expressed to teachers more directly in the school itself. This suggests that the quality of direct feedback from and emotional interaction with students in secondary schools (and therefore the quality of the relationships on which they are based) may well have improved since Lortie's day.

Yet, despite these developments, secondary school classrooms still come across in this study as places lacking emotional intensity—at least from the teachers' point of view. In line with Lortie's study, secondary teachers were more likely to describe their positive relationships with students in terms of acknowledgement and respect than loving and liking. Other kinds of evidence confirmed this pattern.

For one thing, only secondary teachers (compared to elementary ones) cited seeing students in a new light, outside their own classes, as a source of positive emotion (there were three such cases). Reciprocally, of course, this also involved students seeing their *teachers* in a new light too. Here are two of the examples:

> I had a student last year who was not particularly motivated as a classroom student. I've been dealing with that student in the last little while as a member of an athletics team. As an athlete, he is a very different person than he is as a classroom student. Interacting with the individual in a different context can be very positive. As a classroom student, the person can be disruptive. As an athlete he can be a very positive individual .... If a person's priority is not what is going on in your class, it can be very frustrating. You get outside the classroom and deal with the same individual where you are into their field of interest, you can see that in this area, what they are looking for is success in something different, and you see a much more positive light of that individual in the different context.

> In Art class [which this mathematics teacher was covering while the teacher was absent], I showed her how to do the math home-work [which she implored the teacher to help her with] .... A lot of the times, it's more the interaction with the students outside the classroom on a one-to-one basis, or in a small group. You see them in the lunchroom where I don't always have to be their teacher, disciplinarian, inside the classroom. I can let loose a little and also see them in a different light.

Here, there is a hint that, in the classroom, secondary school teachers feel they do not know or are not known by their students in any deep sense—that secondary school classrooms are not places where teachers develop shared emotional goals with students or have close emotional bonds and connections with them. This means, of course, that secondary teachers may not feel known by their students either, as moral, emotional people. Indeed, this was the most frequently mentioned source of negative emotion for them (8 nominations).

In these instances, teachers complained about being misunderstood, unjustly accused, treated as a stereotype, and not acknowledged. Examples included overhearing students refer to a teacher (incorrectly) as gay because of his high-pitched laugh; being accused of being a "rat" when teachers inadvertently betrayed student confidences to other teachers or family members; being unfairly accused of "picking on" students when teachers were trying to help them; being accused of racism because of not allowing a student hall passes so he could be excused from class when the student already had a record of wandering about the school; being expected by students to behave like kindergarten teachers and put answers on the board for them to copy; and being treated not as a committed professional, but as a stereotype of any teacher, whose efforts merit no special acknowledgement. Stereotyping is a prime example of emotional (and cognitive) misunderstanding; for it involves interpreting the conduct of another not according to knowledge of that person's unique character and motivations, but according to the supposed qualities and traits of the group that he or she

supposedly represents as a homosexual, or white racist, or simply as a teacher, a role, without life or personality.

Interestingly, all but one of these instances (the purportedly "gay" man) of not being known or acknowledged as a person were cited by women teachers. Also, not one example of failing to be acknowledged or known, as a cause of negative emotion, was mentioned by the elementary teachers in our study. In addition to this, while only one elementary teacher referred even remotely to experiences with students outside the classroom being a cause of positive emotion, this was a common pattern ($n = 6$) among secondary school teachers. Indeed *all* the male secondary teachers in our sample cited experiences outside rather than inside their own classroom as the source of positive emotion in their interaction with students.

Oatley (1991), argues that one of the causes of negative emotion is bad relationships or no relationships. From our evidence, in the eyes of teachers, secondary school classrooms appear to be places where such patterns and causes of negative emotion are a problem. Secondary school teachers often feel not known by their students; and their emotional connections with them feel more distant than is true for their elementary colleagues. The best chances of breakthrough, insight and positive relationship are achieved outside the classroom where teachers have the chance of seeing their students and being seen by them in a new light. Important gender differences also seem to be at work here since men appear more likely to gain their psychic rewards with students outside the secondary school classroom, while women are more likely to report being misunderstood by their students as a source of negative emotion. In addition, academic issues of classroom learning more often gave rise to reports of negative rather than positive emotion in the accounts of the teachers we studied.

One of the reasons for the presence of emotional misunderstanding and emotional distance in secondary school classrooms is undoubtedly the physical geography of high school teaching. The bureaucratic, specialized organizational pattern of secondary school life makes emotional understanding and connection with large numbers of students exceedingly difficult; especially given that contact with them is usually highly fragmented (Sizer, 1992).

Yet, a parallel study of secondary school teachers in a school improvement project that I am conducting with a group of colleagues suggests that there may be more to the emotional misunderstandings of secondary school teaching than problems of physical distance created by the conventional structures and timetables of high schools. In this study, which involved interviews with a dozen teachers in each of four secondary schools, all but one of the teachers in the school being discussed here found that the positive emotions which many students brought to the classroom with them were the strongest, and sometimes virtually the single, source of encouragement in teachers' work. As one teacher commented:

> I love working with teenagers. I can't imagine doing anything else. I find it really stimulating and interesting. I love to work with students and see them come in as Grade 9s and then for the four or five years they're here, mature and become quite responsible people.

However, while all the secondary school teachers who were interviewed stated that they attempted to be aware of and responsive to students' emotions in the classroom, they did so mainly when it was felt that these emotions might interfere with students' learning. Teachers generally tried to make allowances for disturbing and distracting emotions that students brought into the classroom. In some cases, these emotions were treated as general psychological dispositions that needed to be managed if the classroom was going to be a workable environment. One teacher referred to students who were "overly exuberant, emotional and usually it's just a case of asking them to calm down or whatever". However, she also indicated that it was important to determine whether they "really are being over-exuberant or whether there's really something wrong and they're acting out, because there's a big, more underlying problem".

Teachers tried to be especially attentive to larger problems that were emotionally disturbing for students and that intruded into the classroom. They sought to be "aware of (students') feelings and … help them deal with them in a positive manner".

Other teachers acknowledged that:

> I don't think you can teach without taking into account that you are looking at thirty people who have all come from a different emotional morning every day. Some of them come to school after having had a lot of problems at home. Some come to school hungry. Some come to school with other things on their mind so that learning is the last thing they want to think of.
>
> Sometimes you get a feeling that it's just a bad day for them or perhaps they'll come and talk to you right away at the start of class: 'I'm having a really bad day; can I sit and do this?'

Teachers were prepared to make individual allowances and interventions for these emotional disturbances and intrusions.[3]

> I suppose it depends on whether we know the student is having a bad day and we know ordinarily they are not that way, in which case we would try and be sympathetic or whatever and/or (recognize that) the student's always like that. I suppose … well, we just try to deal with it the best way we can. But, you know, you try to sort of recognize them as individual students, whether this is typical for them or not.
>
> I will encourage students if they have a day where they're definitely out of it, they don't feel good or they didn't sleep well last night or there's a problem that they can tell me at the beginning of the class and I will not engage them in active behaviour as much as I would normally. So they can say this or they can say, 'today I need the day off. I need to just sit. Don't ask me any questions'. And if this happens too often then we obviously have to have a talk about it.
>
> If there is something going on at home or anything else in their lives, then you say, 'Okay, listen. Let's deal with this later, or now, whatever you like' …

[3] Every teacher except one made extensive comments of the same kind — for brevity's sake, just a few are quoted here.

These teachers' responses about how they deal with students' emotions show an effort to be attentive to students' emotional states and engagements on the one hand, while regarding these emotional problems as representing deviations from or disturbances to the classroom norm on the other. Classroom emotions are seen to intrude into learning from the outside—from the family, home and personal life. They are viewed as departures from normal days, normal ages or normal academic levels. These norms are used for constructing emotional understanding (although this may often in practice be emotional misunderstanding) of students. As one teacher observed:

> I'm going to have to know about the age level that you're teaching at, which involves actual emotional and academic level, because then if a kid's having a bad day, you can understand that that is typical of a fourteen year old, and that allows you then to adapt your lessons to the individual as well. So you really have to understand the child.

Emotions are noticed when they depart from what is developmentally and academically "normal". They are noticeable exceptions, characteristic of "bad days" or days when students are "out of it".

The solutions to these disturbances are to make allowances and adjustments for individuals, try to listen and understand, meet with them individually before or after school or during lunch, not take emotional outbursts personally, "find a nice little quiet spot … to make them feel comfortable," and try to deal with emotional problems outside the classroom learning situation itself (in a separate quiet room, for example). An invisible, unstated backdrop to these teachers' responses is the regular emotional environment of their classrooms and of the teaching-learning process itself. There seems to be a tacit emotional grammar of secondary school teaching in these responses where emotions are normalized or neutralized to make the pedagogical process as smooth and easy as possible. Emotions are attended to when they intrude upon this grammar, threatening to disturb the order it represents. Emotions appear to threaten to flood the classroom, or to divert students' capacity to benefit from

it—so they have to be tolerated, managed and accommodated.

By and large, classrooms are seen as arenas where students' emotions are managed and responded to, not as places that can, do or should actively generate particular kinds of student emotion (either positive or negative) in and of themselves. Teachers referred only infrequently to classroom learning and to the school itself as places that were also responsible for creating negative student emotion or as places that did and should take responsibility for building positive student emotion. Only two teachers acknowledged that emotional problems could arise for students as a result of what the school and its teachers did (and not just because of external matters in students' homes or personal lives). A member of the school's school improvement committee argued that many of her colleagues:

> Don't come at (things) from a student point of view. In many cases I think they come at it from a teacher point of view, so that if a kid is frustrated, they get frustrated, and I don't think, in some cases, they know how to deal with it.

One of the teacher-librarians acknowledged how "in a library setting, you have to be really conscious of… the pressures these kids are under to get assignments in … around exam time". As a result, "their emotions are right out there, and maybe we see them more than they show their teachers".

Those teachers who were more ready to design the emotional climate of their classrooms to be supportive for students had exceptional or specialized roles compared to the rest of the sample—roles that tended to draw their attention towards the emotional needs of all their students; in special education, guidance and counselling, or library work.

In general, though, providing extra emotional support for students, not as compassionate exceptions but as processes that are built into the routines of how classroom learning is organized, and how students' voices are heard, can create problems for teachers who organize their classrooms and relationships with students in particular ways. When teachers were specifically asked how the school promoted positive emotions like exhilaration and enjoyment, everything they mentioned took place *outside* the core processes of teaching and learning in classrooms. The examples to which teachers pointed took the form of school-wide awards, ceremonies, sports events, rallies, dances, competitions, weekly bulletins and other initiatives such as music in the cafeteria. While rituals, ceremonies and celebrations are certainly an important part of cultivating and celebrating positive emotions in all institutional life—a way that the organization reflects itself back in positive and valued ways to its members—among the teachers we interviewed, they did not appear to take place within the classroom itself.

In short, this sample of secondary school teachers was demonstrably "compassionate" towards and "very interested in" students, and rarely complained about students in the staffroom. Yet, while teachers appeared to be ever-ready to make allowances for students having personal problems or experiencing bad days, they made little reference to changing their core classroom processes so as to be more responsive to *all* students' purposes and emotional needs, or to be able to create positive relationships and engagements with learning and change. Teachers, in other words, seemed to approach their task and student relationships from a standpoint of professional distance; a standpoint that crowded out their students' and their own emotionality as a valued part of classroom life. Emotions appeared to be regarded as a threat to individual learning and classroom order—dangerous and disturbing influences that spilled over from other areas of students' lives and that teachers then had to manage. Redesigning classroom life and classroom learning, so that these things could be more emotionally positive for all students, was hardly mentioned.

Among secondary teachers, the evidence in this chapter suggests that, while teachers are generally compassionate towards their students, their classrooms lack emotional intensity. Teachers seem more concerned to fend off and manage negative emotion that threatens to intrude from the outside, rather than develop positive emotions in their own right. Secondary teachers gain many of their emotional rewards and build meaningful relationships

with students outside the classroom, not within it. Inside the classroom, teachers may sometimes feel not known or misunderstood by their students. Academic learning is more often a source of negative than positive emotion for them. Secondary schools may not be emotional deserts, but their structures, curriculum, purposes and images of professionalism seem to create classroom environments that are more affectively arid than in the elementary domain.

If secondary school reformers really care about quality, they would do well to turn their attention away from curriculum consistency, testing processes, accountability measures and other technologies of control, towards developing structures, purposes and programs of secondary schooling that will help teachers and students build a more solid base of emotional understanding with each other, on which successful teaching can be built (Hargreaves, 1998a).

## 6. Conclusion

Teaching is an emotional practice. Interacting with numerous children and adults each working day, teachers use their emotions all the time. This use of emotion can be helpful or harmful, raising classroom standards or lowering them; building collegiality and parent partnerships or putting other adults at a distance. The capacity to use emotions well is grounded not just in individual competence or emotional intelligence. Emotions are located not just in the individual mind; they are embedded and expressed in human interactions and relationships. As such, the capacity for people to use their emotions well in the workplace depends on two other things in addition to individual emotional competence: what people's jobs or professions expect of them emotionally, and how their organization structures human interactions in ways that help or hinder emotional expression and understanding.

One of the key criteria for being able to use one's emotions well in ways that improve performance among groups of people, is the existence of emotional understanding. In teaching, this is central to high standards, good colleagueship and strong partnerships. Among teachers and those with whom they work, emotional understanding is enhanced or undermined by how teachers are expected or how they expect themselves to be emotionally, and by the ways their schools are organized. These patterns of expectation and organization create particular kinds of emotional geography, which bring teachers together with students, parents and one another, or keep them apart.

Three kinds of emotional geography were evident in our database on teachers' perceptions of their emotional interactions with students—professional, political and physical. These emotional geographies were configured differently between elementary and secondary teachers, and had different effects on the chances of achieving emotional understanding in either case.

In general, there were strong and encouraging signs that since the time of Dan Lortie's study of schoolteachers in the late 1960s, teachers now gain their psychic and emotional rewards not just from exceptional breakthroughs with individual students, nor only from receiving positive student feedback once their teaching of them is over. Teachers now gain positive feedback from students while they are teaching them; and this occurs with whole class groups as well as with individuals. This is an indication of stronger emotional understanding between teachers and students than in Lortie's day.

However, our data also reveal important differences in emotional understanding and emotional geography between elementary and secondary teachers. Elementary classrooms came across as places of emotional intensity where personal and physical closeness and expectations of professional warmth in continuous and enduring classroom relationships create a solid basis for emotional understanding—as indicated by elementary teachers' recollections of positive emotion all being with students they taught in their own classrooms. If any emotional geographies pose risks to consolidating that emotional understanding, these are the geographies of political distance where power differences between teachers and students can lead to active dislike and rejection in the emotionally intense environment of the elementary classroom. In this sense, more widespread emotional

understanding in elementary schools may depend not only on physical and personal closeness underpinned by norms of professional warmth, but also on distributing power and responsibility for decisions about learning, assessment and other matters more widely among students—thereby easing the power differences between teachers and students.

In secondary schools, patterns of school organization and professional norms guiding interactions with students seemed to pose more problems of achieving emotional understanding in the classroom. Secondary teachers reported being not known or acknowledged by students, were the only ones to identify out-of-classroom examples as sources of positive emotion, and in our secondary school improvement study, they appeared to regard emotions as troubling disturbances that flooded into the classroom from problems with families, or friends, interrupting its orderly management.

The emotional geographies of secondary schooling that posed the strongest threats to emotional understanding in our database seemed to be physical and professional ones. The subject specialist timetable which divides students among many teachers and vice versa—a pattern that is being reinforced by global patterns of curriculum reform and curriculum standard-setting—fragmented the interactions between teachers and their students and overloaded the burden of cognitive content coverage in the classroom, making emotional understanding and personal knowledge and acknowlegement difficult to achieve. At the same time, secondary teachers (especially subject teachers) seemed to approach their relationships with students, not uncaringly, but certainly in more professionally distanced ways than their elementary colleagues, as Lortie initially found. Achieving stronger emotional bonds and understanding between secondary school teachers and their students as a basis for high-quality learning would therefore seem to depend on securing the structural changes to secondary school curriculum and organization, in terms of mini-schools, sub-schools or house systems that have been widely advocated over the years (e.g. Sizer, 1992; Hargreaves, Earl, & Ryan, 1996). It would also seem to require challenging the norms of professional and emotional distance to which secondary school subject teachers commonly seem to subscribe.

If we are serious about standards, we must become serious about emotions too and look again at the organizational conditions and professional expectations that can increase emotional understanding between teachers and their students as a basis for learning. By focusing only on cognitive standards themselves, and the rational processes to achieve them, we may, ironically, be reinforcing structures and professional expectations that undermine the very emotional understanding that is foundational to achieving and sustaining those standards.

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