

Emotional Geographies of Teaching

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This paper introduces a new concept in educational research and social science: that of emotional geographies. Emotional geographies describe the patterns of closeness and distance in human interactions that shape the emotions we experience about relationships to ourselves, each other, and the world around us. Drawing on an interview-based study of 53 elementary and secondary teachers, the paper describes five emotional geographies of teacher-parent interactions—sociocultural, moral, professional, physical, and political—and their consequences.

INTRODUCTION

Around the world, important efforts are being made to improve standards of learning and teaching. Guided by cognitive science and impelled by the demands for new work skills in the informational society, these reform efforts are stressing more constructivist approaches to learning, greater emphasis on problem solving and knowledge application, and increased attention to creativity. New learning standards are raising the profile of new teaching strategies and standards that are more in tune with constructivist principles and the best ideas in cognitive science. Yet somehow, standards-based and largely cognitive-driven reforms do not capture all of what matters most in developing really good teaching. They do not quite get to the heart of it.

Teaching and learning are not only concerned with knowledge, cognition, and skill. They are also *emotional practices* (Hargreaves, 1998). This does not mean they are *solely* emotional practices. Emotion and cognition, feeling and thinking, combine together in all social practices in complex ways (James, 1917; Oatley, 1991). But teaching and learning are *irretrievably* emotional in nature (Salzberger-Wittenberg, Henry, & Osborne, 1983). Denzin (1984) argues that an emotional practice is

an embedded practice that produces for the person, an expected or unexpected emotional alteration in the inner and outer streams of experience. . . . Emotional practices make people problematic objects to themselves. The emotional practice radiates through the person's body and streams of experience, giving emotional culmination to thoughts, feelings and actions. (p. 89)

As an emotional practice, teaching activates, colors, and expresses the feelings and actions of teachers and those they influence. Teachers can enthuse their students or bore them, be approachable to or stand-offish with parents, trust their colleagues or be suspicious of them. All teaching is therefore inextricably emotional—by design or default.

Recent years have seen efforts to remedy the neglect of emotion in the fields of teaching and teacher development. This work highlights the virtues of caring (Acker, 1992; Noddings, 1992; Elbaz, 1992), passionate (Fried, 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 (Day, 1998; Fullan, 1999; Goleman, 1995, 1998) among teachers and to the significance of emotionality in particular areas of the curriculum such as arts education (e.g. Eisner, 1986).

This literature provides a counterdiscourse to more technical and cognitive science-driven conceptions of teaching that dominate the language of educational policy and administration. At the same time, though, it tends to represent teachers' emotions and emotionality in personal, psychological, and individual terms. Becoming a tactful, caring, or passionate 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.

More contextual understandings of emotions are evident in studies of the emotional expectations for and realities of other occupations (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Fineman, 1993) such as nursing (Chambliss, 1996), social work (Satyamurti, 1981), debt collection (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991), flight attendancy (Hochschild, 1983), and detective work (Stenross & Kleinman, 1989). Just as people experience and express emotions differently from one culture to another, they are also expected to display particular emotions that are appropriate for different occupations. For example, debt collectors are expected to cultivate and convey a sense of irritation (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1991); whereas medical practitioners are expected to show distanced concern (Chambliss, 1996). The recurrent emotional experiences that people have in their respective occupations affect their identities and their relationships with clients in distinctive ways. Each occupation and its culture has different emotional expectations, contours, and effects on workers and their clients. Teaching is no exception.

Looking at teaching through a broader, more contextualized view of emotion sensitizes us to the changing context of teachers' emotions within the special work life of teaching. It also takes discussion of emotions in education beyond honorable and sacred ideals of love, care, trust, and support towards a more profane realm of unsettling and darker emotions in teaching such as guilt, shame, anger, jealousy, frustration, and fear (Fine-

man, 1993). In this latter vein, 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 (Blackmore, 1996; Dinham & Scott, 1997; Nias, 1991; Troman & Woods, 2000; Woods, Jeffrey, Troman, & Boyle, 1997;); 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, 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. This paper sets out a preliminary conceptual framework of what I term *emotional geographies of teaching* that addresses how teachers’ emotions are embedded in the conditions and interactions of their work.

THE STUDY

The data on which the paper is based are drawn from a study of the emotions of teaching and educational change which comprised interviews with 53 teachers in a range of elementary and secondary schools in Ontario, Canada. The sample was distributed across 15 varied schools of different levels and sizes and serving different kinds of communities (i.e., urban, rural, suburban). In each school, we asked principals to identify a sample of up to 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.

The interviews lasted for 1 to 1 1/2 hours and concentrated on eliciting teachers’ reports of their emotional relationships to their work, their professional development, 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 with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents. Because of the range of the data, this paper is largely based on one category of teachers’ reports about significant emotional episodes involving interactions with parents.¹ In the book-length analysis of *The Emotions of Teaching* that we are producing from this study, we also analyze teachers’ reports of emotional episodes with students, colleagues, and administrators; we investigate the emotional labor of and ways teachers managed their emotions with these different groups; we look at the rela-

tionship between emotions and teachers' ethnocultural identity; and we elucidate the nature of teachers' emotional responses to different forms of educational change (Hargreaves, Beatty, Lasky, Schmidt, & James-Wilson, in press).

While one-time interviews have limitations as ways of getting others to access and disclose their own emotions (and we have therefore been complementing 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. And, although 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.

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.

EMOTIONAL UNDERSTANDING

The theoretical framework for this social and organizational analysis of teachers' emotions is grounded in two basic concepts: *emotional understanding* and *emotional geographies*. According to Denzin (1984), emotional understanding

is an intersubjective process requiring that one person enter into the field of experience of another and experience for herself the same or similar experiences experienced by another. The subjective interpretation of another's emotional experience from one's own standpoint is central to emotional understanding. Shared and shareable emotionality lie at the core of what it means to understand and meaningfully enter into the emotional experiences of another. (p. 137)

Teaching, learning, and leading all draw upon emotional understanding as people reach into the past store of their own emotional experience to interpret and unravel, instantaneously, at-a-glance, the emotional experiences and responses of others. Denzin (1984) describes how emotional understanding can be established through a number of means including emotional "infection" (spreading optimistic or pessimistic moods to others), vicarious emotional understanding (where we empathize with people's lives or predicaments through theatre or literature, for example), sharing emotional experience (as when families experience a wedding or bereavement), and by developing long-standing, close relationships with others. Extensive evidence of the importance of emotional understanding among Grade 7

and 8 teachers trying to create programs, assessment practices, and school structures that strengthen their emotional bonds with students is provided in a previous study titled *Learning to Change: Teaching Beyond Subjects and Standards* (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001).

Without relationships of emotional understanding, teachers (indeed anyone) are prone to experience emotional misunderstanding where they “mistake their feelings for the feelings of the other.” (Denzin, 1984, p. 134). Where such close relationships do not exist in schools and teachers do not know students well (Sizer, 1992), teachers can easily misconstrue student exuberance for hostility or parent respect for agreement, for example. Here, teachers view students’ emotions as extensions of their own or they treat students’ emotions stereotypically, attributing typical emotional states to whole groups such as grade levels, high or low tracks, or entire cultural minorities, for example.

Emotional misunderstanding strikes at the foundations of teaching and learning—lowering standards and depressing quality. If we misunderstand how students are responding, we misunderstand how they learn. Successful teaching and learning therefore depend on establishing close bonds with students (and also with colleagues and parents) and on creating conditions of teaching that make emotional understanding possible.

Emotional understanding is achieved not just by acts of personal will, sensitivity, or virtue. It is not simply a result of emotional competence or exercising emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Similarly, emotional misunderstanding arises not just because of personal flaws or deficiencies in empathy or other emotional competences. Rather, as Denzin (1984) argues, emotional misunderstanding is a pervasive and chronic feature of everyday interactions where human engagements are not based on the kind of shared experience that fosters close and common understanding.

EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHIES

School teaching is full of spurious emotion. Schools are places where boredom is often misinterpreted as studious commitment and frustration or enthusiasm are viewed as hyperactivity, for example. Willard Waller (1932) more than touched on the sources of such misunderstandings, in his discussion of what he called “the teacher stereotype”:

The teacher stereotype is a thin but impenetrable veil that comes between the teacher and all other human beings. The teacher can never know what others are really like because they are not like that when the teacher is watching them. (p. 49)

The classroom, like the community, argued Waller, is a place where teachers are necessarily distanced from those immediately around them:

Social distance is characteristic of the personal entanglements of teachers and students. It is a necessity where the subordination of one person to another is required, for distance makes possible that recession of feeling without which the authority of another is not tolerable. . . . Between adult and child is an ineradicable social distance that seems at times an impassable gulf (which) . . . arises from the fact that . . . the adult has found his place in the world and the child has not. . . . To the natural distance between adult and child is added a greater distance when the adult is a teacher and the child is a student, and this distance arises mainly from the fact that the teacher must give orders to the child. They cannot know each other, for we can never know a person at whom we only peer through institutional bars. (pp. 279, 280)

Waller's (1932) insights about the role of social distance in teacher-student and adult-child authority relations are perhaps somewhat cynical by today's standards. Nonetheless, they point to how emotional understanding and misunderstanding in teaching result from what I term *emotional geographies*. 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.

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. Analysis of data from the emotions project points to several forms of emotional distance and closeness that can threaten emotional understanding among teachers, students, colleagues, and parents. This paper concentrates more on issues of distance rather than closeness and identifies sociocultural, moral, professional, political, and physical distance as five key emotional geographies of teaching.² The paper draws largely on one area of the data set—teachers' reports of their interactions with parents—to illustrate what these emotional geographies of teaching look like in practice.³

It is important to list three caveats to statements regarding emotional geographies of teaching. First, there are no "natural" or "universal" rules of emotional geography in teaching or elsewhere. There is no ideal or optimal closeness or distance between teachers and others that transcends all cultures and work contexts or that is precisely measurable in a universal way (de Lima, 1997). The emotional geographies of teacher-parent relations are typically characterized by greater professional distance in Hong Kong (Lee, 1996), for example, than in many parts of South America (Bernhard &

Freire, 1999). These differences reflect important cross-cultural variations in how people experience and express different aspects of emotionality in their lives (Kitayama & Marcus, 1994). Like senses of personal space, emotional geographies are culture bound, not context free.

Second, the emotional geographies of human interaction are not only physical phenomena. We can feel distant from people who are right next to us, yet close to loved ones who are miles away. Emotions have imaginary geographies (Shields, 1991) of psychological closeness or distance as well as physical ones. Emotional geographies are therefore subjective as well as objective in nature.⁴

Third, distance and closeness are not just structural or cultural conditions that shape the interactions between people.⁵ Teachers, like other service workers or workers in the caring professions, often invest hard emotional work or emotional labor in achieving greater emotional closeness to or distance from their clients (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Emotional geographies of teaching are therefore active accomplishments by teachers that structure and enculture their work, as much as being structured and encultured by it. Teachers, in other words, make and remake the emotional geographies of their interactions with others but not in circumstances of their own choosing. I will now examine each of these emotional geographies more closely.

SOCIOCULTURAL DISTANCE

In today's rapidly changing world, more and more children belong to cultures that are different from and unfamiliar to those of their teachers. Coming predominantly from lower, middle, and upper working-class backgrounds (Lindblad & Prieto, 1992) in a profession of limited ethnocultural diversity (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Gordon, 2000), teachers are socioculturally distanced from many of their students' families. They often find themselves teaching "other people's children" (Delpit, 1993).

For teachers whose mean age is well into the 40s in most Western countries (OECD, 1998), their students often seem, in Bigum and Green's (1993) words, like aliens in the classroom. Likewise, many students' parents seem like aliens in the community. All too often, teachers look at students and parents with growing incomprehension. They are physically, socially, and culturally removed from the communities in which they teach and do not know where parents and students are coming from.

This sociocultural distance often leads teachers to stereotype and to be stereotyped by the communities they serve. This stereotyping rests on more than Waller's (1932) traditional teacher authority. Popkewitz (1998), for example, shows how teachers in poor urban and rural schools use "populational reasoning" to ascribe characteristics in a blanket way to the stu-

dents and communities they serve. Teachers often have assumptions and expectations about parental interest and support that are socioculturally biased, misconstruing problems of poverty as problems of single motherhood or poor parenting generally (Levin & Riffel, 1997). The emotional episode recalled by one teacher in our study described how

(A mother's) child was just a joy. . . . lovely girl. She was the oldest of five kids. She was in grade four. She was given so many responsibilities at home that she seldom had a chance to do her homework. And I keep on at Mom—"she's got to get her homework done, she's in grade 4, she's going to get more and more. . . . Don't you understand that?" "I'm a working mom (the parent retorted)! When I was her age I had to look after the kids." (So the teacher arranged for her to stay in at recess). . . . Anyway at the very end of the year, the mom took me to the office . . . and she said, "Jenny's never had such a bad teacher. . . . You say that she's below level in language and that's a lie. I know she can do it—she's just lazy." . . . She's verbally abusing her daughter who's a lovely kid. . . . Jenny was there and there were a couple of kids cleaning up in the classroom, and I felt embarrassed for Jenny. . . . I couldn't understand where this mom was coming from. . . . (I felt) just so incredulous. . . . I understand that she must be busy—five kids, she's busy . . . and yet the child . . . has to have an education. And why isn't the mom understanding this? . . . I was hurt because the mom didn't realize all that I was doing; but angry and upset at the fact that the mom didn't realize what a gem she had in this child.

Teachers may also regard parents' failure to attend meetings or other officially organized events as failure to support their children or the school (Burgess, Herphey, & Moxan, 1991). In a secondary school that had rapidly changed from being in a small village to a highly diverse expanding community, one teacher in our study said, "parents are busy people too, so when we offer a parent's night, we don't get a big population of parents coming." Another remarked, "we're trying to reach out and bring parents in and involve them more in the life of the school but at the same time, parents are really stressed and I think parents are sort of abdicating their responsibility of educating the kids to an institution."

Other teachers are inclined to measure parenting or "sensitive mothering" of young children against a yardstick of practice that is culturally skewed towards white middle-class norms (Vincent & Warren, 1998). Some teachers in our study complained, for example, about parents who lied to cover up their children's absences, bought their children expensive presents when they were still suspended from school, let their teenagers drive irresponsibly, failed to prevent their young adolescents from smoking and drinking, or did not view swearing in class as a problem. However, in a number of

working class and ethnocultural groups, swearing is a routine part of ordinary language. Similarly, lying to protect one's child against an institution that failed and marginalized oneself, might be viewed as a highly moral and caring act rather than an immoral dereliction of responsibility.

In a number of cases in our study, teachers were upset that parents did not seem to care for their children at all.

I find the most frustrating experience is when you phone home and you can tell by the tone of the parent that they don't care. They too have given up. If the parent has given up on their own child, it's going to be very difficult for a teacher to get across to a student as well. . . . We deal with that on a daily basis.

One child in grade six . . . is a very nice kid but I really think mom is nuts. . . . She had ended up locking him out. She had taken money from him and then he had taken it back to pay for the camping trip. She found out and accused him of stealing and so he wasn't allowed to go on the camping trip. I felt really bad for the kid. I worry about him, I guess. I see him in four or five years down the road running away or decking her. . . . (I feel) disgust towards his mother.

Teachers' perceptions that parents did not care for their children provoked responses of incredulity, hopelessness, and even disgust among them. There was a difference, an otherness about these parents that teachers found hard to understand. How could they fail to love their children, care for them properly, or support their education? Teachers were at a loss to know where these parents were coming from. The sociocultural distance between them seemed just too great.

Sometimes, the "otherness" of parents and their attitudes toward their own children is not just mystifying to teachers—it is seen as a source of danger and personal threat. All but one of these examples in our data were reported by elementary teachers whose more frequent and intense interactions with difficult or argumentative parents were experienced as more imminently disturbing to them. Here, parents were not just socioculturally distanced from the teacher, but also physically too close! Teachers' comments communicated a sense of dangerous intrusion into or pollution of their world that the "otherness" of some parents threatened. In all these cases, teachers made negative judgements and psychologized about "problem" parents and families, viewed the differences as deficiencies, and stigmatized parents as "mad," "crazy," "nuts," or "screamers"—thereby undermining the rationality and legitimacy of their opposition and criticism. Negative attributions to parents and families by teachers included an African Canadian father from a "split family—father doesn't talk to mother, mother doesn't talk to father"—who, when offered a separate interview,

“started to ask me ridiculous questions and grill me over the phone about things that were completely unreasonable and wouldn’t take no for an answer. . . . and it was just crazy. They’re just venting on you. And that happens fairly frequently unfortunately.”

Another teacher described how “what we find with kids who have severe behavioral problems is that very often you’ll see these kids come out of single-parent households and sometimes you’ll find that the relationship between the child and let’s say, the mother, is an extraordinarily close one, to the point where the child has . . . almost a kind of a special role and . . . the mother inadvertently makes a career of advocating for the child,” of her child’s “dysfunction,” giving “her an opportunity to organize her life around that. . . . This particular child is very bonded to his mother, and it’s a black family.” In this instance, the mother had felt that this teacher’s refusal to grant hall passes to her son was “a racist issue.” In these cases, parents were not merely different; they were irrationally and intrusively dangerous. They were “screamers” who “blurted” into the teacher’s face, “grilled” them about their judgements or “vented” on them.

Strangeness or “otherness” arises out of complex interactions between difference and distance. Stereotyping and stigmatization often occur where actual interactions between culturally different groups are infrequent or superficial (Goffman, 1963)—a product of *physical distance* between them that I will discuss later. They may also result from people’s willful assertions or unwitting assumptions about the superiority or normality of their own class or culture compared to others (Popkewitz, 1998; Said, 1994)—a feature of the *political distance* I will also describe later. Teachers’ attributions of “otherness” to seemingly difficult parents can therefore result from poor knowledge or presumptuousness on their part.

Equally however, the tendencies of service workers’ and “caring” professionals to blame and complain about their clients can result from feelings of powerlessness and helplessness—often referred to as low senses of self-efficacy. Here, “othering” is a way of coming to terms with a felt inability to make a difference in clients’ lives—blaming clients themselves for any failure to respond (Ashton & Webb, 1985; Rosenholtz, 1989). Blame, in other words, frequently results from a suppressed sense of guilt or shame about being unable to fulfill one’s job or calling and to care for one’s clients sufficiently (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991; Scheff, 1994), especially when downsizing accelerates change processes or other work reforms reduce one’s capacity to be effective in the job (Hochschild, 1983).

Similarly, when the demands of caring feel overwhelming (e.g., when there are too many needy students and needy parents as well), teachers may try to insulate themselves against burnout by creating boundaries or buffer zones between themselves and their clients (Epstein, 1998). Social and medical workers, for example, sometimes routinize their relationships with cli-

ents to minimize the need for expressing empathy and concern (Chambliss, 1996; Satyamurti, 1981). In short, the sociocultural distance that sometimes separates teachers from parents is not always or only the product of poor knowledge, presumptuousness, or prejudice. It can also result from teachers' efforts to protect themselves from burnout in intensified work conditions that make it hard to care for people effectively.

None of this is meant to deny that, as a cross section of society, some parents are indeed difficult and even dangerous. Many parents, like people generally, are far from perfect. Yet too often teachers see obstacles rather than opportunities in the changing lives and cultures of their students, families, and communities. Stronger efforts and better working conditions are needed to help teachers build better emotional understanding with many parents and students and bridge the sociocultural gap that separates them. Otherwise, parental deficiencies will remain exaggerated in many teachers' eyes. Deficiencies will sometimes be imputed unfairly, and teachers will have less access to the cultural knowledge and emotional understanding that could help them deal more effectively with the most troublesome parents.

MORAL DISTANCE

Emotions are moral phenomena. They are closely bound up with and triggered by our purposes. At the same time, emotions help us choose among a wide variety of options in a highly complex world by narrowing down our choices (Brody & Hall, 1995). As Oatley and Jenkins (1996) argue, "in real life, a purely logical search through all the possibilities is not possible. Emotions . . . are necessary to bridge across the unexpected and the unknown to guide reason, and to give priorities among multiple goals." People experience happiness when they are achieving their purposes or are suspended from them—as in holidays or listening to music, for example (Oatley, 1991). Achievement and success bring satisfaction and pleasure.

In the emotions project, teachers experienced positive emotions with parents when they received gratitude, appreciation, agreement, and support from them. As one teacher said, "the more comments that I hear back then I know I am still, after 25 years, on the right track and still somehow getting to the students and still relating to the students in a positive way." Another remarked on how "this morning, I was totally spoiled with parents who were saying that I taught their kids a lot." Such appreciation for teachers' dedication and success was "energizing—it makes you want to go out and try new things." "It opens up creativity and makes you want to risk"; "it picks you up—makes you feel good." "It erodes some of the stress that's come along with all the other changes that have happened in edu-

cation”; “you’re encouraged to try harder and do more in your program.” As one teacher put it, “if people keep throwing you little pieces of food, you will keep coming back.” Teachers welcome, indeed crave, this positive feedback not only from present and former students (Hargreaves, 1999; Lortie, 1975), but from parents too.

Clear indications of moral agreement and support as well as appreciation create a kind of closeness between teachers and parents. Now, as Kitayama and Marcus (1994) argue, this need for positive feedback about personal success may be greater in Western and especially American culture where individual achievement is prized highly; and the expectation to feel something good all the time is culturally widespread. Indeed, these observations may explain why, despite a widespread equality ethic in teaching where teachers are reluctant to acknowledge that any colleague is better than any other (Campbell, 1996), teachers in our study welcomed being singled out publicly by parents as special or better than their colleagues—in school council meetings, letters to the principal, or donations to the school, for example. Within the North American context of our study, therefore, moral closeness with and support from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators reinforces teachers’ sense of purpose and is a source of positive and energizing emotion for them.

By contrast, negative emotion can occur when there is a great moral distance between teachers and others, when teachers feel their purposes are being threatened or have been lost. Nias (1991), for example, has described how the English government’s National Curriculum created senses of grief, loss, bereavement, and (literally) *demoralization* among those who first had to implement it. Similarly, when teachers’ purposes are at odds with those around them, anxiety, frustration, anger, and guilt affect everyone involved. Such emotions can be educationally damaging, leading teachers and others to retreat inwards and lose energy and enthusiasm for their work (Goleman, 1995).

The effects of moral distance and conflicting purposes were especially apparent in teachers’ interactions with parents. One example was a parent who did not understand current teaching approaches and why their child may not have been achieving and who demanded to see curriculum documents, insisting that the teacher should be teaching differently. Another parent who was a volunteer in elementary school and who was seen as being overly ambitious for her child, went behind the teacher’s back to solicit additional, more difficult work from the teacher of the next grade. The teacher complained that “she went to the next grade up hoping that if he knew all of this material then the next year he would just breeze through it. She has sort of lost the purpose of having a program that is current.” Another parent volunteer followed a teacher’s class to the computer laboratory and argued that the program being pursued there was insufficiently

rigorous (whereas the teacher's contrary purpose was to get students feeling comfortable with computers).

In these and other cases, teachers were questioned about their competence, expertise, program decisions, and assessment practices—at heart, their very purposes. Teachers were angry and upset when parents criticized their purposes, judgement, expertise, and basic professionalism. Indeed, questioning of their academic purposes and expertise was the strongest source of negative emotion among teachers in our study. If anything, as the foregoing examples from elementary schools reveal, physical closeness in terms of more frequent interactions between teachers and parents in parent councils or elsewhere can exacerbate the anxieties and conflicts occasioned by differences of purpose—unless the means exist to work through these differences together.

Moral difference and distance need not, of themselves, be problems in schooling or teaching. Indeed, as Maurer (1996) argues, we often learn more from people who are different from us than ones who are the same. The point in organizations is not to hope that people already share the same goals. In a complex world of shifting values and great cultural diversity, this aspiration is increasingly impractical (Hargreaves, 1994). More than this, taking refuge in small, self-affirming communities of tightly shared values—as, for example, in many schools of choice—runs the risk of developing organizations and cultures that are balkanized, inward, and exclusionary. In successful organizations, rather, people acknowledge and understand each other's purposes, and try and work together *towards* creating more common ones. Indeed, this very process of narrowing distance and working through difference makes organizations emotionally vital (Goleman, 1998). Our data suggest that teachers' interactions with parents are often difficult because the means to work through these differences of purpose are absent. This brings us to the problem of professional distance.

PROFESSIONAL DISTANCE

The social distance between teacher and child or teacher and parent, of which Waller (1932) spoke, is not only a result of adult-child authority relations or even the institutionalized office of teaching. It is also a matter of professional distance. As Grumet (1988) points out, this is a historically gendered issue.

Female teachers complied with the rationalization and bureaucratization that pervaded the common schools as the industrial culture saturated the urban areas. Rather than emulate the continuous and extended relation of a mother and her maturing child, they acquiesced to the graded schools—to working with one age group for one

year at a time. Rather than demand the extended relation that would bind them over time to individual children, they agreed to large group instruction where the power of the peer collective was at least as powerful as the mother/child bond. (p. 55)

In many ways, schoolteaching has become an occupation with a feminine caring ethic that is trapped within a rationalized and bureaucratized structure. In addition, the ambivalent and uncertain status of teaching has also pushed teachers to clamor (rightly) for greater reward and recognition, but in the dubious direction of “classical professionalism” (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996).

While many core activities of teaching and learning require close emotional understanding between teachers, parents, and students, “classical” professionalism has been modeled on the traditionally male preserves of medicine and law that require professionals to avoid emotional entanglements with their clients’ problems and to maintain professional distance from them (Grumet, 1988). The dilemma for teachers is that although they are supposed to care for their students, they are expected to do so in a somewhat clinical and detached way—to mask their emotions with parents and control them when they are around students. The “classical” criteria of professional autonomy and independence (Friedson, 1994; Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977) help make the job of masking and maintaining emotional distance easier. In these respects, bureaucratic regulation and classical professional aspirations conspire together to distance teachers from those around them. As Grumet (1988) reflects about women educators especially, “when we attempt to rectify our humiliating situation by emulating the protectionism and elitism of the other ‘professions,’ we subscribe to patriarchy’s contempt for the familiar, for the personal . . . for us” (p. 58).

In our own study, teachers most experienced negative emotion in their interactions with parents when their expertise, instructional knowledge, and judgements for which they felt uniquely qualified were questioned. Teacher after teacher was irate or incredulous about parents’ failure to understand teachers’ practices. A secondary teacher who had previously worked in industry portrayed the inviolable and almost sacrosanct nature of his expertise in the following way:

Parents think that they’re the experts in education and it amazes me. I sent a note home saying that (the father) wasn’t qualified (to criticize the teacher’s assessment practices) and this got him a little annoyed. And we had conversations. And I said, “what would you think if I presumed to walk into your office and tell you how to do your job after you’ve been there for however long you’ve been at your job. And yet you think you can comment on my job? You’re not even qualified.

Good, you're concerned about your kid. But don't think you're going to intimidate me into giving him more marks, because you're not. . . ."

An elementary teacher who complained about a parent criticizing her curriculum programming in computer-based education

was disturbed in the fact that she was questioning what I was doing as a teacher. I'm the one with the expertise! I'm the one with the education! I'm the one with the degree! She is to be there to help.

In cases like these, teachers rarely seemed to doubt whether their own judgements might be flawed or incorrect. They made remarks such as "I was so sure that I was not wrong," "they still felt that they were right and I still felt I was right," and "the only thing that has really changed has been my attitude towards her (the mother)."

Teachers who preserve their "classical" professional autonomy by keeping parents at a distance might protect themselves from parental criticism, but they also insulate themselves from praise and support. While positive feedback from parents was the most frequently cited source of positive emotion for teachers, many teachers felt it was all too rare. Teachers did not hear enough positive comments from parents. Parents did not see them often enough. It was "too easy to shut your door" in teaching. Positive parental feedback, in this sense, seems to be embedded in a scarce emotional economy of teacher-parent interactions, especially at the secondary level where the norm of professional distance severely constrains opportunities for more regular and meaningful interaction. Here especially, the problems of professional distance are further compounded by difficulties of physical distance in teacher-parent interactions.

PHYSICAL DISTANCE

The most self-evident emotional geography of teaching is a physical one. Emotional understanding and the establishment of emotional bonds with teachers and parents require proximity and some measure of intensity, frequency, and continuity in interaction. We cannot know or understand people we rarely meet; nor can we be understood by them in return. Our data suggest that secondary school teaching is a place where the difficulties of physical distance are especially acute—where teachers and parents are mainly engaged not in relationships but in strings of infrequent and disconnected interactions (Lasky, 2000).

In secondary schools, reported communications with parents were overwhelmingly episodic and infrequent. They took place either in staged meetings or through non-face-to-face mechanisms of written notes and telephone calls. Over half the incidents of positive emotion reported by teachers took

place at parents' nights when teachers were praised and thanked for their efforts. Yet, a British study of parents' nights shows that in the 8 minutes or so they talk together, secondary teachers tend to set the agenda, dominate the talk, and show little responsiveness to parents' knowledge about their own children (Walker & MacLure, 1999).

By contrast, only two citations of positive emotion among elementary teachers in our study referred to parents' nights—both of these involving teachers of older, middle-school-age children. Of the remaining nine incidents of positive emotion cited by secondary teachers, four took place through the indirect means of the telephone or written communication (compared to one at the elementary level). Only one positive communication cited by secondary teachers took place in an informal setting. This involved a teacher in our only rural secondary school site who described positive encounters with a parent in the community. In elementary schools, by contrast, half the instances of positive emotion (the largest category) involved informal discussions with parents and parent volunteers in and around the school.

Similar patterns occurred in teachers' reports of negative emotional incidents with parents. Among secondary teachers, the vast majority of such episodes took place on the telephone (11 out of 16 cases). These largely concerned problems of attendance and behavior. Three more took place in writing, and just one occurred on parent's night (where its stage-managed nature helps insulate teachers against the possibility of negative emotional outbursts). Only one reported episode of negative emotion at the secondary level occurred in a more informal setting. Conversely, elementary teachers reported negative emotional episodes as being more spread out—with four instances occurring informally with parent volunteers, two taking place when parents came into the school, three happening on the telephone, and one being in writing.

Just as secondary teachers seem to have less emotionally intense classroom relationships with students compared to their elementary colleagues (Hargreaves, 1999), our data suggest they have less emotionally intense relationships with students' parents as well. These interactions seem to be infrequent and intermittent and to take place primarily through indirect communication or at formal events. To the *sociocultural distance* that cultural diversity and changing families often place between teachers and parents, secondary schools add a *professional distance* of relatively formal and stage-managed interactions, as well as a *physical distance* of infrequent and non-face-to-face communication that can make emotional understanding and strong partnerships between teachers and parents even more difficult to establish. Together, these emotional geographies of secondary teaching pose significant threats to the possibilities for better emotional understanding between teachers and the changing parents and students they serve.

POLITICAL DISTANCE

Emotions are not just a personal matter. They are bound up with people's experiences of power and powerlessness. Teaching, in this sense, is rife with emotional politics. Blase and Anderson (1995), for example, describe how teachers experience anger, resignation, depression, anxiety, or (among favored insiders) satisfaction when they work for authoritarian principals. Similar emotions occur in response to intrusive, unwanted, and inescapable imposed reforms (Jeffrey & Woods, 1996).

Although teachers sometimes endeavor to put parents professionally at a distance, in some circumstances parents seem too powerful and get physically too close. The elementary teachers described earlier recalled parents grilling them, venting on them or "blurting" things into their faces. Interestingly, much of our vocabulary for emotion and for power is also a spatial, geographical one. People are central or peripheral, "up" or "down," on the inside, or "out of things" (Stallybrass & White, 1986). As Kemper (1995) argues, "a very large number of human emotions can be understood as responses to the power and/or status meanings and implications of situations" (p. 125). Kemper's work shows that increases in our power make us feel more secure because we are protected. Increased status leads to feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and contentment along with pride when we are responsible for the increased status or gratitude if someone else is. Conversely, reductions in power lead to feelings of fear and anxiety that result from compulsion; and losses of status create feelings of anger at those who are responsible, shame if we hold ourselves responsible, and depression if the situation seems irredeemable to us.

Power relationships with parents are often unclear, uncertain, and contested. Although teachers are more able to fend off parental criticisms about their instructional judgements and expertise, in the areas of behavior and attendance they often have to rely on active parental support to achieve their goals. In our own study, parents' failure to support or "backup" teachers in relation to their children's attendance or behavior problems was the second most common source of negative emotion in teachers and was manifested in feelings of exasperation and powerlessness. Teachers felt they could not coerce parents legally into cooperating—"the law ties our hands on it. If the parent allows the kid to stay home, there's nothing I can do about that." Or they might be afraid of parents—"I don't have the nerve to . . . confront the parents about lying." Or they would feel powerless to combat the extensive socialization effects of the home:

I thought I had their support in how to deal with this situation. When he is getting these sorts of rewards at home for negative behavior there is very little that I can do here. . . . I felt a sense of hopelessness in working with this child to help him solve some of his problems.

In the emotional geography of schooling, many teachers prefer to be politically superior to parents, securing their active support, rather than experience parents having power over them.

When teachers were asked to describe an incident when they had had to mask their emotions to fit the situation, by far the largest number of cases concerned interactions with parents. Examples of how teachers had to mask or manage their emotions in such encounters included the following:

I am not good at having people yell at me. . . . whenever something happens like that, that gets really icky, I get tingles up the back of my spine and get butterflies in my stomach. It is like when I go on stage. I get nervous as soon as I end the situation, a feeling of calm comes over me. I am really good at dissipating that kind of thing. . . . I try to calm it down. I felt lots of fear. I wondered what he was going to do. Is he going to go to the vice principal? Is he going to hit me?

There's been the odd time where they come in and have been very aggressive. And I've got to remain calm and stick to the issue of how we can help this student without getting involved in the emotional part of it. And I find it, personally, very difficult to try and defuse a person who's upset, so I have to pretend that I'm focussing when inside I'm all upset. I find that difficult dealing with upset parents.

She was completely misinformed by her son that everybody is "necking" out in the yard. That is absolutely not true. I was angry. I could feel the adrenaline starting to flow at all these accusations that were completely unfounded—adrenaline and anger. . . . As a result we discussed it. I tried to stay calm which I managed to do. She went away, she was happy and realized that . . . the situation as she saw it wasn't correct.

When power plays are at work, interactions with parents can provoke fear, anger, anxiety, and other disturbing emotions. It is not surprising that teachers sometimes want to avoid, minimize, or stage manage these interactions. Goleman (1995) describes this masking and management as emotional competence or intelligence. He sees it as integral to achieving success in the workplace. By contrast, Hochschild (1983) describes the masking in terms of emotional labor which is sacrificial, exploitative, and inauthentic. "This labor," she says, "requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (p. 7).

For Hochschild (1983), emotional labor is largely negative. It involves trading in part of the self to motivate clients or one's subordinates within the organization in exchange for job security, financial reward, and prof-

itability. In education, for example, Blackmore (1996) argues that women principals who work in repressive policy environments have become the emotional middle managers of educational reform, motivating their staffs to implement the impractical and unpalatable policies of government—and losing something of themselves and their health in the process. Indeed, Boler (1999) criticizes Goleman's (1995) concept of emotional intelligence as being one that “packages marketable solutions for success and self-improvement” (p. 65) and adapts people emotionally to the imperatives of organizational profitability.

Alternatively, others argue that Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labor underplays the pleasures of acting and playfulness (e.g., Fineman, 1993). In her Marxian inspired analysis, Hochschild perhaps overestimates the *exchange value* of emotional labor (as in the profit value or emotional “selling out” of a salesperson's smile), at the expense of the *use value* of such labor (what that labor creates and recreates in oneself and in others when it leads to motivation, engagement, fulfillment, or happiness) as an act of sincere emotional giving.

Whether emotional masking is a mark of competence or exploitation is best settled empirically by research on different occupations. Emotional labor may be fulfilling or exploitative depending on the power relationships and purposes at stake in the workplace. In their review of emotional labor in a range of occupations, Ashforth & Humphrey (1993) conclude that masking or manufacturing emotions to fit the setting leads to competence and fulfillment when people can act in accordance with their own values, can identify with the expectations of the role, and are in tune with the emotions required of it. Emotion management and masking are more laborious and damaging, however, when workers are obliged to sacrifice their values or do not identify with the job and its purposes—when, in other words, they are casualties of moral and political distance.

One crucial study for understanding the emotional politics and labor of teacher-parent interactions concerns emotional labor among detectives.⁶ Stenross and Kleinmann (1989) found that only the emotional labor that detectives performed with victims was troublesome to them. When working with criminals, however, emotional labor was enjoyable. Criminals were the “real stuff” of detective work that detectives looked forward to the most. Emotional displays by criminals were judged inauthentic by detectives and therefore discarded as not requiring any attention. Victims' emotions, however, were judged to be authentic and in need of attention, yet they did not help detectives solve their cases. Victims who had been burgled or mugged tried to give detectives instructions and tell them what leads to follow, yet were often unsupportive or unappreciative of their efforts. Detectives nonetheless had to treat victims respectfully since they might complain to supervisors and accuse the detectives of being unsupportive. In the face of possible

reprimand and pressure from above, detectives regarded victims as emotional burdens to be endured as they carried out their work.

Whereas parents and students are not, of course, victims and criminals respectively, the analogy does work in the sense that, like detectives, teachers work with two different groups. Students are seen as core to the work and in a position of lesser power; and parents are regarded as less core, but still influential and unavoidable as well as being in a more ambivalent relation of power. Teachers might therefore experience the emotional labor of working with parents as more rewarding if schools and teachers could move parents from the periphery to the core of teachers' work, if the changing power relations of teacher-parent interaction in a climate of increasing accountability could be acknowledged and addressed more openly, and if differences of purpose could be negotiated more explicitly.

In summary, the emotional politics of teacher-parent relations are complex and difficult. This is because at the secondary level many teachers' tend to place a physical and professional distance between themselves and parents. More widely, threat and anxiety emerge when teachers' and parents' purposes are dissonant, cultures are different, power relations are ambivalent, and interactions seem physically too close.

CONCLUSIONS

Emotions are integral to teaching. Yet this means more than advocating less rationalization and more passion in teaching and more than cultivating more caring dispositions or greater emotional intelligence among teachers. We also need to understand why teachers' emotions are configured in particular ways in the changing and varying organizational life of schools. The conceptual framework of emotional geographies provides a way to make sense of these forms and combinations of distance and closeness that threaten the emotional understanding that is foundational to high standards of teaching and learning. Attending to the sociocultural, moral, professional, physical, and political aspects of emotional geography in teaching may help us better understand how to create stronger emotional understanding in teachers' relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and others, as well as how to avert or alleviate threats to that understanding.

Increased contact and greater physical as well as professional closeness are not themselves sufficient to develop strong emotional understanding, however. There must also be efforts to acknowledge, empathize with, discuss, and reconcile the different purposes that teachers and others have for children's education that otherwise put a damaging *moral distance* between them. This means redefining teacher professionalism from a "classical" stance of professional autonomy from clients to a stance of openness with them where parents become partners at the core of teachers' work (Har-

greaves & Goodson, 1996). As our elementary teacher data show, where great moral distances exist between teachers and parents, where their purposes are at odds with each other, and where there are no means or desires to resolve them, physically close and frequent interactions will only magnify conflict and frustration between them. More accountability or “parent power” in this situation will only exacerbate teachers’ anxieties and increase the extent of masking in their interactions.

Political distance is also a threat to people whose interactions are physically close. Where teacher-parent relations are characterized by power plays more than partnerships, negative emotion will always surface. Our data suggest that physically closer, more frequent interactions between teachers and parents will actually exacerbate negative emotions between them unless educators also make serious efforts to be less *professionally distant* in these interactions, unless teachers and parents are more *politically open* towards and respectful of each other, and unless both parties show more readiness to listen to and engage with each other’s purposes for their children’s education.

In a culturally diverse, increasingly unequal, and rapidly changing world, building strong, reciprocal partnerships with others to develop the depth of emotional understanding on which successful learning among and caring for all students depends has never been more necessary. Yet in a world where parents are more demanding, teaching is changing, the cultural differences are widening, and most teachers are overloaded by and unsupported in meeting rampant reform obligations, teachers’ understandable inclination is to close their classroom doors, contain the demand, and manage any remaining interactions with parents as best as they can. Ironically, however, building better emotional understanding with students and their parents really requires teachers to “move towards the danger” (Maurer, 1996) in working with those of whom they have been most anxious and afraid, to form better, more productive alliances (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). In short, it requires teachers to redefine the emotional geographies of teacher-parent relationships and to make these relationships a core rather than peripheral part of their work.⁷

Better emotional understanding and the quality of education that comes from it also requires a reversal in many educational policies and policy processes (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Policy must refrain from putting teachers back in their classroom boxes by overloading the curriculum, increasing the content focus, creating a profusion of learning standards, limiting teachers’ time out of class to interact with others, and standardizing their interactions with those around them. It must also beware of seeking to increase the power of stakeholders other than teachers in education through parent councils, school choice, or greater accountability, unless this empowerment is embedded in parallel commitments to improving relationships between

these stakeholders and teachers. Instead, policy must provide a framework that gives teachers the discretion, the conditions, the expectations, and the opportunities to develop and exercise their emotional competence of caring for, of learning from, and of developing emotional understanding among all those whose lives and actions affect the children that they teach.

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Notes

1 Analyses of other parts of our database and of the interview schedule that prompted it can be found in Hargreaves (2000), Lasky (2000), and Schmidt (2000).

2 Although these five emotional geographies are the most prominent in the data, others are also plausible and there remains considerable room for further development of the theory of emotional geographies.

3 More detailed presentations of the project's findings are available elsewhere concerning teachers' interviews with parents (Hargreaves, 2000; Lasky, 2000), with students (Hargreaves, 2000), among secondary school department heads (Schmidt, 2000), and with other colleagues and senior administrators (Hargreaves et al., in press).

4 In this sense, space is like time in being a relative and subjective as well as an absolute and objective construction (Hargreaves, 1994; Hawking, 1991).

5 The concept of emotional labor is described later in the paper.

6 I am especially grateful to my graduate assistant, Sue Winton, for drawing this work and her own insightful interpretation of it to my attention.

7 These same points apply to and are confirmed by our data on teacher' interactions and relationships with students and colleagues.

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