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Emotional Expectations of Educators:

The social imaginary and emotional labor of teachers in American news media

MSc in Media and Communication

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Abstract

Drawing on Charles Taylor's modern social imaginary, this study offers a perspective for understanding how teachers are represented and characterized in American news media. Specifically, I study the way the social imaginary of teachers contributes to the performance of Arlie Russell Hochschild's notion of emotional labor. I use this approach to analyze a case study of teacher representations in American mainstream news using the national news provider, NBC, and its local affiliate WRAL in Raleigh, North Carolina. The data for this study spanned the time period from March 2020 to February 2021. Using a political economic approach, this inquiry examined the dynamic between media, power, the social imaginary of teachers, and related emotional labor in the American news media. Findings indicate that media, in the news narratives, perpetuates strong expectations of teachers' emotional connection with students. In addition, analysis showed that teachers tend to represent themselves as having an inherent quality or 'nature' for teaching, and participate heavily in disseminating the social imaginary of teachers. Thirdly, the analysis revealed teachers are portrayed as resilient in news media, perpetuating what Taylor called a 'false social imaginary.' This thesis contributes to the understanding how media plays a role the shaping of the modern social imaginary of teachers. It also highlighted the way that teachers are perceived by others and themselves, and the importance of these perceptions in the shaping of teachers' experiences. Taken together, these finding contribute to the body of knowledge of the social imaginary, showing how the media constructs narratives about teachers and how these narratives shape teachers' everyday experiences in American society.

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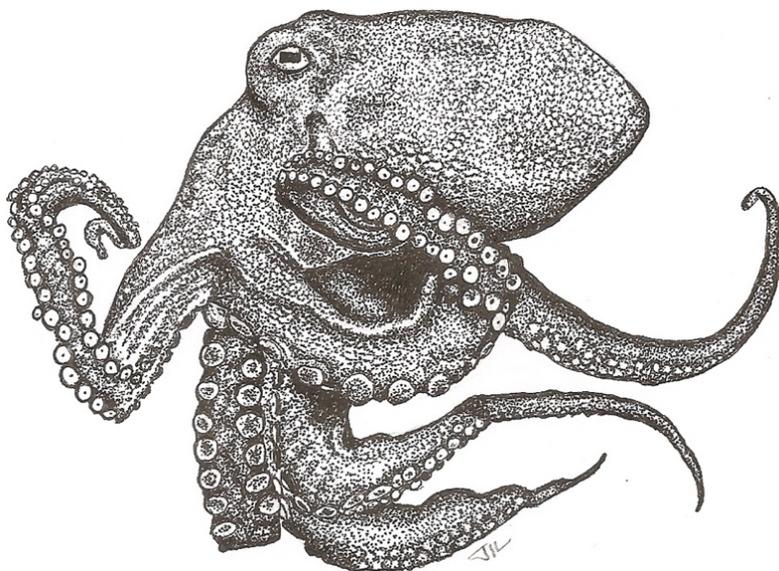


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Chapter 1: Introduction

American teachers have experienced a great deal of hardship during the coronavirus pandemic that began in the winter of 2020. Public schools have historically been underfunded, and the rapid transition to online education made circumstances more challenging. There has been both a pressure to open schools, a pressure to remain closed, and hybrid models proposed in between. In addition, a sharp change from in-person to online education has tested teachers and schools beyond the resources allocated to them. With school funding a continually contested issue, both nationally and locally, additional responsibilities have been heaped on teachers. Teachers have not had much warning to adapt their lesson plans to an online environment. Adding to the pandemic challenges, the divisive political landscape in the United States during this time has often made the debate contentious and based on political ideologies, not science. The pandemic has created a great deal of uncertainty in homes, workplaces, and classrooms. Importantly, the economy relies on the care of children, in part so that parents can work outside the home.

This thesis will explore the societal expectations of the teacher within the news media, what Charles Taylor (2007) calls the social imaginary. That is, the collective understanding and the “normal expectations we have for each other, the kind of common understanding that enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life” (Ibid, 24). It will also consider the effects of the mediated construction of the social imaginary on the real experiences of teachers. In the case of the American teacher, there exists a history of storytelling of the heroic teacher, giving her precious time to the children in her charge. It is an important part of the American cultural narrative. The narratives of the teacher are held by nearly everyone in the society and retold for the next generation to carry on. Society has an idea of the teacher, an agreed upon conception that is shared among those within it. Media, in its modern form, contributes to the spread of these societal ideas.

Furthermore, particular attention will be paid to the ways teachers are expected to perform emotional labor in the course of their work with children. Emotional labor is what Arlie Russell Hochschild (2012: 7) calls labor that requires “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display.” The nation’s children are struggling with a lack of socialization, increased screen time, and lack of focus, in addition to more serious concerns, such as grief and absenteeism (NYTimes, 2020). Much of this responsibility for the

emotional needs of children has fallen on teachers. States have cut resources to schools over the years, resulting in lack of school nurses and psychologists, with the excess work laid on teachers (Gagnon and Mattingly, 2016). The emotional labor that teachers have frequently done has become heightened in the pandemic. This research examines the expectations the whole of society has for teachers to do emotional labor, and the malleable nature of a social imaginary in times of crisis.

There is an intimate connection between media, the way we think about the world, and the way it shapes individual experience. It has become increasingly impossible to separate the intertwined nature of media and everyday life (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 77). The news media features narratives about teachers. It is one of the ways that the social imaginary is shared. They are stories of dedication, appreciation, heroism, and an inherent nature of teachers. It has been illustrated that the modern social imaginary is highly represented in news media and perpetuated through the stories a society tells about itself. The public sphere is a shared mutual space where a society comes to meet through media, consider matters of mutual interest, and form a collective understanding about them (Taylor, 2007: 83). The social is now fundamentally formed by media and must be reconsidered, taking into account the way that media now reshapes it (Ibid). The news media shares these narratives of teachers, particularly during a time of crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic, when issues of education are at the forefront. These news narratives participate in creating the cultural understanding of what we as a society have come to understand of what it is to be a teacher. News media is an important part of daily life and plays a role in the cultural developments and processes of the modern society (Hill, 2007: 98). In this way, media and culture are intertwined.

Educational issues in the United States are increasingly contested, where political and economic factors interact with the cultural landscape, often in quite divisive ways. Indeed, neoliberal ideologies and corporate ownership of large media outlets allow for those in authoritative positions to have access to the messaging about educational issues. Journalists often accept official sources of information with little critique (McChesney, 2008: 31). Authorities control the flow of information and provide a platform for ideas and the narratives that make up the social imaginary of teachers. The media system contributes to the way society forms the social imaginary of teachers and the expectations we have of them.

The social imaginary is not simply about ideas, but it has material implications and consequences for the lives of teachers.

This thesis will examine the role media plays in the social imaginary of American teachers. Using empirical data from mainstream national news sources and a local affiliate in North Carolina, it examines teachers in the American social landscape and how emotional labor intersects with a social imaginary. This study will allow for a critical investigation of the material consequences of the social imaginary and the emotional labor of teachers.

This thesis, as its main objective, seeks to critically investigate the following research questions:

1. How do local and national American news media represent the social imaginary of teachers?
2. In what way does American news media contribute to the social imaginary and expectations of emotional labor for teachers?
3. In relation to the two questions above, how do social relations of political-economic power affect these developments of the social imaginary and emotional labor or teachers?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter discusses two important concepts in social science that theoretically ground this research: social imaginary and emotional labor. It begins with an in-depth explanation of Charles Taylor's (2007) concept of the modern social imaginary and the overarching themes that anchor the research approach. It then considers Arlie Russell Hochschild's (2012) concept of emotional labor, as well as other academic contributions to the development of the concept, and highlights prominent research and scholarship pertaining to gender in the practice of emotional labor.

First, I argue that the social imaginary has four key components, which are particularly relevant to understanding teachers' role in society. Second, I discuss how emotional labor reflects the real experiences of teachers, which can run counter to the idealized type of the social imaginary. The third section explains how media are sites where these constructed narratives are shared and disseminated. Next, I consider the ways that corporate media ownership and power exert influence over the flow of media, which affects the dissemination of these narratives. Building on this media focus, the final section will discuss media trust in a local and national context and how these differences relate to polarization in American society.

2.1: Social Imaginaries and Teachers

In the United States and many other nations, teachers are often perceived as having universally shared specific traits. Those who embark on careers as educators are often associated with particular human qualities, which create distinct types of representations: the caring educator or the selfless teacher, putting children before all else and making sacrifices over and above the job description. Much of this is represented and repeated in media, conjuring a collective and pervasive image, one that is embedded in the minds of audiences and society.

These representations comprise what Charles Taylor (2007) refers to as the social imaginary. The social imaginary is represented in media as an image shared by the whole of society, as well as in the stories and legends told within its cultural foundations (Ibid). More specifically, Taylor (2007: 23) defines the social imaginary as:

“[T]he ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie their expectations.”

Taylor’s (2007) concept of the social imaginary relies heavily on the important works of Jurgen Habermas and Benedict Anderson. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (2006: 6) provided a pivotal shift upon the notion of nationhood, in which he defined the nation as “an imagined political community.” By ‘imagined’ Anderson intended that those in a society never encounter the majority of others within that society; nonetheless, they conceive of their existence and feel connected to them (Ibid, 6). It is within this conception, that of the imagined, that Taylor introduced the concept of the social imaginary.

For both Anderson (2006) and Taylor (2007), with the advent of secular society and the deviation from the church as the center of society, people achieved solidarity through language, stories, and others within the society. Influenced by the work of Locke and Grotius, the modern social imaginary is rooted in a sense of moral order and has been increasing over the past four centuries in growth and intensity (Taylor, 2007: 5). This concept of moral order of society has become fundamental to our conception of what it means to be in a society (Ibid, 6). Using this theoretical approach, we can better conceptualize the figure of the teacher in media and how they interact with other groups, such as students, parents, administrators, politicians, and society. We can also understand how they arrived at their worldview, and how they fit together with others within their own group (Ibid, 25).

The theoretical approach in this thesis identifies four key components to the social imaginary in Taylor’s (2007) work: 1) stories, myths, and legends; 2) expectations; 3) personification; and 4) contradiction.

The social imaginary is best understood as shared by all of society in the *stories, myths, and legends* told within that society (Taylor, 2007: 23). This collective understanding in the way a society ‘imagines’ themselves within that context is provided through the “modes of narrativity” told within that culture (Ibid, 23,177). These beliefs are held by the whole of society and helps us understand the way we relate to each other and what provides the foundation for the expectations in which society depends. People within a society tell the stories, myths, and legends, also about teachers, in order to situate them within their

worldview and share them. As are all myths and legends, these stories are told and re-told, with the potential for changing somewhat as they go. They serve as a way of circulating the social imaginary. The stories, myths, and legends are what carry the social imaginary beyond the realms of theory and into the imagined.

The social imaginary imposes an overall understanding of the *expectations* about how individuals should interact and exist in a society. Expectations influence and shape social actions and in turn these actions becoming assumed and implicit (Taylor, 2007: 29). The social imaginary is a form of social order that permeates and changes to become a dominant view, shaping expectations (Ibid, 28-9). In this way, the understanding among a society provides a sense of validity to the rules and practices within it (Ibid, 23). The rules and practices allow us to carry on in social life. The representation of expectations—for example, of the teacher—in the social imaginary of a particular culture makes interactions more predictable in that society maintains these expectations within the social imaginary. That predictability is demonstrated in the way parents, administrators, colleagues, and society broadly know what to expect from teachers. In this way, a common understanding can be formed in the public sphere. The influence of media in this context is far reaching.

The way individuals see themselves within the society - or *personification* - is a vital factor in the development of the social imaginary. How people imagine their being within the cultural surrounding and their interactions with others in that society is a crucial aspect of a social imaginary. These personifications are not necessarily explicit or overt, but lie in the background, maintaining a moral order that is implicitly understood (Taylor, 2007: 25). It is exhibited in the way individuals interact with each other, how they arrived in their current state, and how they communicate with others, particularly other groups. Therefore, how teachers express themselves in the media allows us to better understand the way that they imagine their position within that society and the way they want to be understood.

Sometimes, those within a society behave in ways that exhibit a *contradiction* to dominant societal norms. Generally, there is a collective sense of the assumed and acceptable ways in which we should act, and what is deemed appropriate and acceptable behavior. One can, though, behave in contrast to these predictable ways of acting (Taylor, 2007: 24). Stepping outside of these acceptable norms and boundaries is invalidating to the cultural rules, and

potentially contributes to steps toward breaking away from the moral order of things. Teachers have conventional ways in which society expects them to act and at times deviate from that expectation. When they behave in ways that are contrary to the societal expected behaviors, such a criminal or violent behavior, they are contradicting the societal norms.

At times, the deep rootedness of the social imaginary in the society can become rigid and oppressive. In turn, Taylor (2007: 183) also suggests that an imaginary can be false, in that it “distorts or covers over certain realities.” In a strict adherence to the group “rules,” participants may be making decisions in contrast to their own well-being, or what some scholars have referred to as “false consciousness” (Mills, 1959; Lukács, 1972). Taylor (2007: 183) refers to false consciousness when he writes, “[L]ike all forms of human imagination, the social imaginary can be full of self-serving fiction and suppression.” Within the social imaginary, there is a sense that there is no other choice or opportunity, binding those within the confines of that worldview (Ibid, 17). In the stories and legends told through media, for example, ideas are formed and perpetuated, and for those in which a particular worldview is not beneficial, the stories can serve to sustain inequities. In the sharing of these stories, myths, and legends through news media, there exists the potential for systematic pressure to conform and accept the status quo as normal.

At the fundamental foundations of the social imaginary, these concepts help to comprehend how society understands teachers and others within it. The expectations we set for ourselves and those around us constitute an order to the way things should be in our understanding and interactions with teachers. Society tells stories, myths, and legends which function to disseminate the social imaginary of teachers and the societal norms expected of them. How teachers speak of themselves in the way they personify themselves to others also helps our understanding and application of the social imaginary. And finally, when teachers contradict the norms set by society, they are acting in contrast to expectations, breaking social rules. These components, used together, are elemental in examining teachers’ role in society. Using these concepts, we can ask how society forms expectations for teachers, not simply to be mere educators, but providing for the emotional needs of the nation’s children.

2.2: Emotional Labor and Education

Research from various theoretical and methodological approaches has examined the essential function emotions play in the workplace (Hochschild, 2012; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Fraad, 2009). First introduced by Arlie Russell Hochschild (2012) in her pivotal work *The Managed Heart*, the concept of emotional labor describes this kind of care work done by workers. Hochschild (2012: 7) states that emotional labor is “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display.” This conception of emotional labor can be applied to the work teachers do in and out of the classroom, in addition to the task of educating children. As recent research suggests, teaching requires more than just instructional knowledge, but emotional effort as well (Hargreaves, 2000).

Society has come to rely on teachers to provide additional care work for those in her classroom. For example, the expression of enthusiasm for the accomplishments of children and the continual need to maintain a positive atmosphere in the classroom are seen as crucial to student success and development (Anderson and Hira: 2020). The role teachers play in the well-being of children is immense. The current coronavirus pandemic has only increased the responsibility on teachers in addition to caring for themselves and that of their own families (Sokal, 2020). This may take a toll on the nation’s educators, exacerbating the risk of teacher burnout, exodus from the field of teaching, and emotional exhaustion.

Hochschild (2012) draws in large part from the writings of Goffman (1959) in his description of the worker as an actor in performance for discerning spectators. There is a differentiation between the types of emotional acting done in the performance of emotional labor: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting involves what Erving Goffman calls ‘impression management’ (1959), and emphasizes the visible performance. Deep acting focuses on the inner feeling (Hochschild:2012; Ashforth and Humphrey: 1993). In the context of education, teachers do both in the classroom, for example, in their feigned enthusiasms for the sake of the mood and in their authentic joy of teaching children. In their expansion of Hochschild’s concept of emotional labor, Ashforth and Humphrey incorporate identity into the debate, stating that “role playing becomes role taking” (1993:102). Therefore, when teachers accept the roles that the social imaginary develops, they in turn assume these characteristics and form identities surrounding these roles.

Due to the time spent with children, teachers are expected to have an in-depth knowledge and insight to the emotional state and needs of the children in their classrooms. Emotional labor, much of which could be considered unpaid labor, is an important focus of social inquiry. Teacher burnout, exhaustion, and the large number of educators leaving the field, more so now than ever in the current situation of Covid-19, are concerning problems in the state of education in the United States. Recent research in the last year of the pandemic has examined the effects on teacher burnout and the need for continued support for the rapid transition to online learning (Sokol et al, 2020). Additionally, some scholars have seen a sharp increase in emotional labor in the workplace and the nebulous margins of essential work and emotional labor (Chatzidakis:2020). With this transition comes additional and changed ways in which teachers are able to reach their students on this level. The newly experienced distance between student and teacher, the inability to fully detect student needs and concerns, and unknown state of the well-being of the child can be additional burdens to the teacher. The transition to online learning has raised new concerns about food insecurity for those children who are on free and reduced lunch programs in the nations underserved schools. Adding to that, the mental health of the classroom children, stemming from the lack of social interactions and additional stress of being home bound, brings teachers in the time of Covid-19 a new set of concerns over and above the ones they were already managing.

Teaching requires a diverse set of emotional rules, such as inhibiting extreme emotions, expressing passion for working with children, and maintaining a calm demeanor. Existing research on the emotional qualities of teachers is varied and has not received much attention until recently (Zembylas, 2003; Bellas, 1999). Various qualitative studies have established that emotional labor is essential to teaching and closely tied to professional and personal consequences (Brennan, 2006; Hargreaves, 1998; Hartley, 2004). Studies on teaching and emotional labor confirm that teachers regularly fake positive and negative emotions, which affects well-being and highly effective teachers have better outcomes emotionally (Taxer and Frenzel: 2015). Studies such as these are important in the understand of teacher burnout and exhaustion.

It is well understood that teacher emotion in the classroom is essential to the well-being of children. Society and families benefit from the extra oversight of the needs of children. The effects of the pandemic on teachers and children are not yet fully understood. In addition,

until we have come through the worst of the pandemic, it is not fully known the effects homeschooling and teachers' inaccessibility to children will have on both teachers and children, in relation to the emotional labor they traditionally have done. Therefore, casting theoretical attention to the emotional labor of teachers, particularly at a time of acute crisis, can shed valuable light on teacher's experiences and how society represents them.

2.3: Teachers, Gender and Emotional Labor

In particular, gender is an important component of emotional labor, since men and women respond differently in relation to their status in society (Hochschild, 2017: 163, 11). As Hochschild states, women use emotional labor more than men in private life and "have put emotional labor on the market, and they know more about its personal costs" (Ibid, 11). Women have less access to resources, power, influence, and status in society and use emotion for different purposes, not as an innate ability, but as a reaction to social status (Ibid). Emotions have customarily been considered a women's matter, but many emotionally taxing professions are dominated by women (Guy, Newman and Mastracci, 2015). According to the U.S. Department of Education, 89 percent of the gender makeup of American elementary education teachers are women (2017-18). Based on the emotional training given to children from a young age, women and girls tend to receive the unspoken and implicit instructions of controlling aggression and instead are encouraged to be pleasant, while boys are encouraged to control their fear and vulnerability (Hochschild, 2012: 163). As a type of hegemony, these roles take on the pretense of something natural, innate to the nature of women, and media plays an essential role in shaping them (Berger on Williams: 2005: 104). Much of the work that women do are in care work and tends to be in lower paid professions. This is evident in that almost half of women's jobs in the United States are pink collar jobs, in caring professions such as child care, nursing aids, and early childhood education, which in the United States generally fall within lower income scales (Fraad, 2009).

Often, women are the care givers in their work, an extension of the care work done at home (Hochschild, 2012; Fraad, 2009). In her essay on emotional labor in the home and the labor of care done in the workplace, Fraad (2009) states the evident observation that working with children is demanding and maintains "the work they require is not only uncompensated, it is financially punished." Research on the connection between class and gender in education reveals perpetuation of these representations, in educational material and media (Apple,

1988). Given that, statistically, nearly half of the work women do relates to emotional labor, women experience more of the personal ramifications of doing care work, such as health and economic consequences (Hochschild, 2012: 11). Some scholars have been critical of the analysis of the feminization of care work in education, instead voicing concern for leaving students to fend for themselves within an uncaring institution (McGregor: 2017). Refusal to do the emotional labor undervalues care work and women's labor, leaving in its wake students lacking the resources needed to thrive (Ibid). This poses the question, if teachers don't do the care work, who will?

The emotional needs of American children have not waned during this pandemic. Emotional labor in the classroom and beyond has been a common undertaking for teachers. Even before the pandemic, teachers took on much of the responsibilities of caring and assuming the role of caregiver in the classroom. Teachers are often stepping into roles they are unprepared for and potentially untrained for, such a grief counselor, therapist, and social worker, among other things. Society has placed a large burden on the back of the nation's teachers. Consequently, teachers are overburdened and reaching burnout levels at high rates. These caregiving roles can become etched in the minds of the whole of the people, shaping the social imaginary. Additional expectations are placed on teachers. Media systems play a consequential role in perpetuating those expectations and stereotypes, often with little critical awareness or reflection on the consequences or outcomes.

2.4: Media, Representation, and Teachers

In addition to Taylor, others theorists have investigated the ways in which media systems contribute to representing the world around us. Frosh, for example, discusses the ways in which media can create a form of poetics, connecting us to realms beyond the ones we immediately perceive or imagine (2019: 1-2). The concept of narrative and poetics is not only suitable to fictional stories in media, but also to journalistic endeavors, as discussed by several social science scholars in recent years (Taylor, 2007; Appadurai, 1990; Anderson, 2006). These narratives exist in the background, providing a sense of comfort of connectivity, and continual representations of the outside world (Frosh, 2019: 5; Barthes, 1986: 76). Frosh (2019: 6) describes a "techno-cultural second nature" in defining the embeddedness and intertwining of media on our world. In this intertwining, we acquire an imagining of the

fables and stories of figures such as the teacher, one in which upon speaking the word, we all conjure a universal image.

For scholars such as Stuart Hall, media representation is made through meaning, in which we are given codes that we learn through culture (Berger on Hall, 2005:168). That relationship, the one between objects and signs, is at the heart of the definition of representation (Hall,1997:19). Through the cultural text, the way we think and feel about them, and the things we say about them—and in turn the representation of them—is what gives the texts meaning (Ibid, 3). Our incorporation of these meanings into the everyday is what makes them impactful, in the way we create narratives and stories about them. As Hall also helps to explain, the common meanings in a given society are shared, and meanings are agreed upon through sociocultural processes (Ibid, 4). When imagining the figure of the teacher, an image is conjured, emotional values are placed on it, and stories are attached to them (Ibid, 5). As Bird says, “we really cannot isolate the role of the media in culture, because the media are firmly anchored into the web of culture, although articulated by individuals in different ways” (2003: 3).

Williams, in his concept of ‘a whole way of life’ in the analysis of culture, takes into account the ways media should be understood as related to the social, economic, and political foundations of the social structure (Berger on Williams, 2005:102). He asserted we cannot separate the material aspect of culture from the symbolic and the interpretation of these signs along with the social and economic systems that create them. The meaning constructed in this symbolism is grounded in the structural practices and material aspects of society (Ibid, 2017:15). Williams maintains the idea that the symbolism in culture is a separate system of society (Fuchs, 2012: 22). As Taylor specifies, the social imaginary is not explicit, but is “carried in images, stories, and legends” (2007: 23). In this way, the social imaginary of the teacher, in its idealized forms as represented in media, has material implications far beyond the symbolic. The anecdotal stories as depicted in news media of the teacher give way for the viewer to form an image of the societal expectations of what it is to be a teacher, which have material consequences on the lives of those who are subjected to them, in physical and economic ways.

The figure of the teacher is perpetuated repeatedly in images and stories in media. These representations of the teacher in media can be varied and problematic, from negative to the idealized and overly positive. There are numerous examples of fictional portrayals of the idealized teacher, from films such as “School of Rock” and “Dead Poet’s Society,” in which the teachers are heavily involved in the emotional care needed by the students. Other representations include the portrayal of the teacher in “Stand and Deliver,” in which he received the heroic portrayal for caring for the students’ education more than his own health and well-being. Depictions of teachers in the news can also be problematic. Portrayals of the selfless teacher who is willing to sacrifice are ubiquitous. Teacher representations in the news media can also make heroic insinuations, and a blatant show of martyrdom. For example, CNN.com, in a series paradoxically called “The Good Stuff”, reported on a teacher who conducted lessons from her post-emergency surgery hospital bed to finish book chapters, as she didn’t want to “leave the kids hanging” (2020). This representation of dedication contrary to her own health has broader implications, in the representation of the teacher as forgoing needs for the sake of dedication, questions about the limits of this dedication should be asked.

Apart from these examples, research has focused on the misrepresentation of the image of the teacher as portrayed in fictional media, often negatively (Swetnam, 1992). Other research has pointed to the need for additional critical investigation in the problematic portrayals of teachers in news media to stem the tide of negative associations being internalized as truth (Reyes and Rios, 2003). Alhamdan et. al. (2014) conducted a comparative study across five countries in the Middle East and Asia to determine differences in media representation of teachers and concluded the societal expectations of teachers to be a caring and responsible. These examples of conflicting research on media portrayals of teachers indicate the significance of the social imaginary in the formation of teacher representations. Media, both fictional and news media, plays a large part in the formation of the social imaginary, serving as a conduit for the stories, myths, and legends that are perpetuated. In addition, these portrayals of teachers in media contribute to the expectations teachers hold for themselves.

In discussing representation, it is also useful to consider how teachers see themselves within the social imaginary, in the sense of personification discussed above. Hall (1996) reminds us that identity is formed within representation and therefore, teachers see themselves within the representation and the social imaginary along with the stories and legends a society tells

about them. As Bird (2003: 5) suggests, we pore through limitless media intuitively and continuously and select the ones that are significant for us. In addition, images come to be taken for reality and people come to see themselves as their images (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 91). Ideas about what it is to be a teacher are, like much of the knowledge we have of the world around us, socially constructed (Couldry and Hepp, 2017:21). These social constructions may or may not change and grow to benefit our needs. Representations can be oppressive in their rigidity, but having a firm hold on identities can be reassuring and provide a sense of security (Frosh, 1991:7). Feelings of security can also foster solidarity among teachers, in which teachers see themselves as a distinct and notable group. As Hall says, their identities are “constructed through, not outside, difference” (1996: 4) and through the ‘other’ we better understand ourselves (Ibid). In speaking about representation, it is also important to consider the ways power in media plays a role in construction of the social imaginary.

2.5: Media and Power

Understanding the ways in which media, power and trust intersect is crucial in examining the representation of teachers and the social imaginary. In the United States and its decidedly polarized political climate, trust in media is in flux. Furthermore, media ownership is highly concentrated, allowing powerful elites to control the messaging. In addition, families, businesses, and teachers are struggling in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, power and trust are ever more important issues of media studies.

In studying media from a political economic perspective, we can better understand the ways in which structural conditions can play a part in the content created for media audience often without the consent of the people (McChesney, 12: 2008). While many are accessing information from various sources, including social media and blogs, the mainstream still maintains an important role in the media communication landscape. There is little argument that media exerts power in society, with an influence over the values and information perpetuated (Corner, 2011:18). This communication power allows public dissemination of information in the public sphere, producing transformational consequences on society (Fuchs, 2015: 33). Critical scholarly research links communication systems and media to the ways in which power is manifested (McChesney, 12: 2008). In this particular context, when we look at the ways in which news is covered in the United States, mainstream journalists typically

accept official sources of information as valid and authentic, in order to avoid conflict or disputes. This has important implications for the who sets the agenda, for what is considered news, and just as importantly, what is not reported (Ibid, 31).

The American media landscape is dominated by large corporate owned media conglomerates that maintain a strong hold on how and what information is disseminated. In the United States, the latest calculation provided by FreePress.org has identified that 90 percent ownership of media is concentrated in five media companies (2018). Critique or exploration of the control of media systems is unwelcome by those who benefit from the status quo (Wasko, 2008: 71). In mainstream media journalism, little critique is made of the existing power structure or the injustices this power structure perpetuates. In the telling of narratives as described above, mainstream journalism rarely asks questions beyond the superficial. There often is less of a tendency to spur debate in the public sphere (Dahlgren, 2009: 96). Major media enterprises tend to maintain the status quo in society, encouraging widely held perceptions and generating ideologies that perpetuate existing relations of power (Corner, 2011: 14).

There is a significant link between the role capital plays in media systems and its effect on democracy and public participation (Wasko: 263). The power of capital in media systems can also affect the lack of criticism and analysis of social issues covered and portrayed in media. Controversial issues are permitted for discussion in some mainstream news media, however often in limited ways. Serious critiques of capital are very unlikely. Instead, narratives are created that often do not prompt viewers to ask questions further. For example, issues around education and teachers are important societal concerns. Critical reporting and investigation on education concerns may be considered an essential practice in a democratic society.

Capital interests, through media, affects and influences how we think about education. Neoliberalism is thought of as the economic theoretical notion that humanity is best advanced by individualism, free markets, free trade, and private property (Harvey, 2005: 2). With this comes increased privatization, including for example schools, textbooks, testing companies, among other things. With privatization and free markets comes a decreased role for public enterprises and the state, lower taxes on private enterprises, and increases in state austerity

policies. The ideology of neoliberalism is important or influential in the development of various social imaginaries, including that of teachers.

As Highmore (2016: 98) argues, powerful media outlets have control over the “means of mental production.” Large media companies have the capacity to advance a social imaginary, changing the way the society thinks about educational issues and about teachers. Neoliberal ideology is an important aspect in developing broad belief systems and worldviews that are often presented in the media (Harvey 2005). Skepticism of the role of the state, an emphasis on individualism and private markets, and austerity politics, which emerge from the neoliberal ideology, enter into the ways in which the public is informed about and understand educational issues and teachers. Thus, powerful media outlets have the resources to disseminate particular narratives, for example around teachers, creating a hegemonic representation, which can significantly influence the development of a social imaginary. Material circumstances affect the care work that people do. Public sector cut backs affects funds for school nurses and psychologists, heaping more responsibility of teachers by asking them to do more with less.

2.6: Media and Trust

Corporate ownership and lack of critical analysis prompts the question about viewers trust in the news they consume from large media conglomerates. In the case of news media, less depends on factuality, and more depends on issues of trust of the information being represented. Factual content lends itself to the assumption that the content being presented is accurate and true (Hill, 2007: 3). Much research has been done on the issue of public trust in news media in recent years due to the stark political polarization in the United States. This polarity indicates the rise in emotion taking increased precedence over objective truth in public attitudes (Hill and Dahlgren, 2020). Viewers typically expect that the information about real events are factual, but scholars consider this to be a naïve outlook (Hill, 2007: 3). Instead, we must take into consideration the ongoing debates between producers and audiences about what is deemed factual in programming (Ibid).

Trust in various forms of American media has been changing in the recent past. National news outlets have long standing reputations over a larger audience and reach a larger number of people, therefore, retain long established trust from the public (Uscinski: 2014, 55). Consequently, studying local and national news comparatively can shed light on the

influence news media has on audiences (Ibid, 55). News media draws our attention, with shocking events, eccentric and uplifting stories, and with catchphrases such as “news you can trust” that indicate impartial journalism necessary in a democracy (Ibid, 144). However, little attention is paid to the ways in which it provides reinforcement of previously held beliefs and information we want to hear. Comparatively, viewers find local information more relatable to their own needs and issues they care about. A recent study by Poynter (2018) examining the different levels of trust between various news media source has shed some light on the issue of media trust. This research found that across all forms of media, viewers had a high degree of trust for local forms of news, both television and newspapers, over other forms (Ibid). This stood in contrast to online only news, which was the least trusted among all forms of news.

Different news media have different impacts, in audience, circulation, and means of distribution. Consequently, these various sources can have different effects on the social imaginary. Smaller, independently owned investigative journalism media cannot reach the kinds of audiences that larger media conglomerates can, therefore cannot have the same kind of influence. Greater distribution and access allow for greater circulation and sharing of messages. This greater access allows for the influence on cultural processes and the way society relates with each other and the social imaginary.

When local news sources are more trusted, we can also surmise that local news has significant, if not greater, power in the formation of the social imaginary, since it has a larger share of the trust of viewers. Viewers place a greater value on the local information they receive, as these issues have a greater importance in their everyday lives. While these local sources are most trusted, most local news stations are owned by large media giants, with agendas not necessarily serving the needs of the local community. These media outlets, in their power to control the message and content, have a great deal of influence over the social imaginary, and, for example, that of teachers. Because a majority of the decisions are made on educational issues and resources are often allocated at the local level, local news is highly influential in the construction and maintenance of the social imaginary.

In the pandemic, with the pressure and hardships placed on teachers, the messages circulated by news media on current issues in education influences the ways society sees the role of teachers. How they are depicted, both on a national and local level, can affect the way society

views teachers. This impacts resource distribution and the assistance teachers need to continue to do their jobs in a healthy and productive way. The significance is great, as the nation's children and their families rely on teachers' well-being, school resources, and quality education. Society maintains a social imaginary of American teachers, and the media plays a large part in the perpetuation of that social imaginary (discussed below). While these are commonly held beliefs that each society upholds, at times these imaginaries can be burdensome and binding. Fundamental conceptions and expectations regarding the role of teachers, the expectation placed on them, and the stories that are told about them are shaped and reproduced in society. Additionally, and maybe most importantly, the ways in which teachers see themselves within society plays a crucial role in the perpetuation of the imaginaries, which is relevant in the ways they express themselves within media.

In this chapter, I have argued that Charles Taylor's concept of the modern social imaginary is fundamental for understanding the way American society thinks about teachers. Further, I discuss how Arlie Russell Hochschild's concept of emotional labor plays an integral role in the way teachers carry out their jobs. In discussing the social imaginary in media, it is fundamental to consider theories around representation and the way the social imaginary of teachers is formed. Just as importantly, how teachers see themselves within that representation plays a part in the way teachers situate themselves within society. Additionally, this chapter highlights how power in media and corporate ownership influences the news. Finally, I have considered existing research on media trust in local and national news contexts and the contribution this has to growing polarity in news. Using these concepts and contextual knowledge allows for the development of comprehensive methodology to analyze news media, detailed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

3.1: Methodology

This research implements a qualitative approach to bring to the research “well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts” (Miles and Huberman, 2014: 24). Qualitative methods interpret descriptive content that is difficult to quantify by approaching “data in the form of words” (Miles and Huberman, 2014: 30). Although an ongoing source of debate, qualitative research designs are not substandard to the quantitative. Instead, qualitative research is simply different and therefore necessitates a varied multifaceted, logical, and methodical means of analysis (Kukartz, 2014: 3). As researchers, our innate critical thinking abilities are applied with data and our previous life experiences affect the final outcome (Bazeley, 2013: 4). These experiences are important in the interpretation of meaning and in the understanding of everyday life (Ibid). Taking that into consideration, researchers also must be keenly aware and address the ways in which their experiences and worldview affect the analysis, interpretation, and outcomes. Hence, selecting a means of analysis in a methodical and systematic manner is of utmost importance.

In this study, a qualitative approach is chosen to provide an understanding of the ways in which teachers are represented in the media. A systematic, interpretive approach is best suited to analyze the concept of the social imaginary and emotional labor, in the nuanced words and representations of teachers by journalists and others. In addition, it allows for examining the ways teachers characterize themselves in how they speak of their role in society and their own placement in the American social imaginary.

John Corner, (2011:87) in the study of media, suggests that we must “assume less and investigate more.” For this reason, personal and experiential assumptions must be acknowledged. Our personal interest in a subject is what inspires research and allows us as researchers to learn more of these subjects, advance knowledge, or facilitate change in an area (Bazeley, 2013: 7). It should be noted that the researcher in this study has worked closely in the past with teachers, parents, and administration at the elementary level in various roles: volunteer work, planning cultural events, board membership, and teacher advocacy. By continually circling back to the research question and maintaining a clear purpose of the research, we can better address these biases (Ibid, 8).

3.2: Research Design and Methods

Motivation for the research stemmed from the clear and palpable pressure placed on the return to in-person schooling by the American media and society. Broadly speaking, this pressure was framed as necessary for economic recovery and became a central theme in the debate on pandemic response. The analysis focuses on a case study of both the national news station NBC and the local NBC affiliate, WRAL, in Raleigh, North Carolina. WRAL is owned by Capitol Broadcasting Company, which, according to their website, also owns a number of television and radio stations across the state of North Carolina, as well as other businesses including a baseball team, hotel groups, real estate and a building supply company (2021). The national syndicate, NBC, is a subsidiary of Comcast, a large media corporation and the largest media cable provider in the United States. Comcast owns all of the NBC media divisions, as well as a hockey organization, and a venture capital company (Comcast, 2021). By providing a comparison, we can better examine the potential differences in the coverage among the national and local media and use the local affiliate as a case study for the national social imaginary.

Research on case studies provide a more detailed look at reality and human behavior and advance the ways in which researchers understand the methods of doing good research (Flyvbjerg, 2001:84). In addition, case studies provide a contextual understanding of the questions being asked (Ibid). For this research, the local television station WRAL in Raleigh, North Carolina was chosen as the focus of this case study for a variety of reasons. Raleigh is a vibrant and rapidly growing mid-sized capital city and, based on the City of Raleigh statistics, has a population of approximately 475,000 inhabitants (2021). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, there are 160,000 children enrolled in Wake County School District, making it the 14th largest school district in the country (2019). The district allows for a diverse population of school children, in racial makeup, socio-economic backgrounds, and includes families from a vast spectrum of cultural and political affiliations. In addition, the large footprint that the district encompasses includes a wide spectrum of urban, suburban, and rural populations.

3.2.1: Sampling

Data collection for the study of the local NBC affiliate over other stations in Raleigh was selected due to the latest Nielsen rating data available from December 2019, showing

viewership of WRAL was the most watched newsgroup in the market (WRAL, 2021). Data collection for WRAL was conducted through the WRAL.com website.(See appendix 3 for the list of stories). A search for a time frame between March 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021 for ‘teacher’ provided a list of links to news stories within the time frame. An additional search was done for the keyword ‘education’, which brought an additional set of links. These links were then reviewed for appropriate video clips, collected and sorted within NVivo and classified into cases based on local and national, then sorted by months, and finally 5 stories within that month. Linked to the transcript were the titles of the stories and the link where the original was found.

Attempts to do the same type of search in the national NBC was not as fruitful. Fewer articles pertaining to teachers were provided when doing the same search within the NBC.com website. Additional attempts to contact the organization via email and searches via library resources were unsuccessful. For the national NBC news source, a search was conducted on Google news using the keywords ‘NBC’ and ‘teachers’ and the same time frame. This was a more productive search and data was collected and sorted in the same way in NVivo.

In an effort for clarity and transparency, ‘stories’ in this thesis refer to only those links that included video of news clips that were originally aired on television, many with in-field reporting and impromptu interviews. Most were accompanied with a rough unpunctuated transcript, which was checked for accuracy. Several linked to a word-for-word account of the video clip in article format, and these were verified before collection for sampling. Other video clips without transcripts provided were transcribed via the Microsoft Word dictate function when possible and verified for accuracy.

In order to have a cross section of data, stories were collected from the time American schools began closing in March 2020 through February 2021, a total of 12 months’ time. Within each month, 5 news stories were chosen for each month of the year and for each local and national news provider, totaling 120 news stories, 60 for WRAL and 60 for NBC. Stories were chosen based on the level of emphasis and focus on teachers, relation to and reference to the difficulties in teaching during Covid-19, children returning to school, and the impacts of closed schools. Because all articles for anything pertaining to teaching and education were collected, many were unsuitable for the study and sampling required narrowing. First

eliminated were stories that were picked up by WRAL from the national syndicate and were not local to Raleigh. Next, any out-of-state stories (i.e., not focusing on North Carolina) were eliminated. Stories that had the keyword ‘teacher’ in the title were selected, and when there were more than enough data during that month, the first 5 in the month were selected.

The data collected is found online, but in its original format was presented on that station’s airwaves. Analysis of the data collected will provide a rich cross section of the representation teachers in news media, both on the local and national level. By collecting data online in this way, the data sampling captures more than what viewers of network television see on a regular basis from their traditional viewing habits. It also constitutes the stations’ content consumed digitally, where viewers can access content on-demand in their own time.

3.2.2: Analyzing the data

The method to coding and analysis took a deductive approach in which research analyzes and describes a pattern of connections and associations that are hypothesized before the research begins. The analysis will therefore deductively suppose what exists in the data (Miles and Huberman, 2014: 82, 37) by operationalizing existing theoretical concepts (Jenson, 2012: 161). A deductive approach seeks to advance a new idea using existing theoretical concepts and collects data to apply that theory to support or refute the new idea (Bazeley, 2013: 335-336). Building upon a conceptual framework of the research, key variables derived from previously published academic research and literature were identified and the relationships between them were presumed prior to beginning the coding process (Miles and Huberman, 2014, 37-38). In following the circular Hermeneutic model, text can be understood with predetermined assumptions but with open mindedness, in order to gain a more thoughtful and nuanced conception that results in a change or deepening of the original assumptions (Kuckartz, 2014: 19-20).

Coding data is used as a way to systematically manage, locate, and sort data, and facilitates analysis of information (Bazeley, 2013: 125). For this research, a line-by-line method of coding was used, making the unit of analysis in this study at the sentence level. (See appendix 3 for data coding sample) After refinement of an original set of codes with the thesis’ supervisor, a final coding scheme was built based on the fundamental concepts inherent to the social imaginary and emotional labor.

3.2.3: Coding scheme

Four codes were implemented for the modern social imaginary to fully incorporate Charles Taylor's concept into the research process (see Appendix 1 for the full codebook). The first being 'expectation', which is a key component of the concept Taylor introduced. Taylor states in his theoretical argument that we meet the expectations a society has set for us and there are standardized conceptions that motivate these expectations (2007: 23). This includes the collectively held principles by the wider population that allow the practices that make up a society, the wider feeling of validity, and the way the differences between others are conceived (Ibid). Therefore, *expectation of teachers* was coded when journalists write of the expectations normally met by teachers in society or the way teachers interact within society, as well as statements that indicate an anticipated or predicted action taken by teacher. Text that indicated what should be, predicated actions by teachers, and implied anticipated behaviors of teachers will be sought.

Another important aspect of Taylor's is the 'images, stories, and legends' told in a society that forms the social imaginary of the way we conceive of teachers. The way people, as Taylor states, "imagine their social surroundings" (2007: 23) in these mythological ways is a pivotal aspect of the social imaginary. These stories and legends give the social imaginary of teachers a widely shared sense of acceptability (Ibid). Therefore, in the coding of content, any portrayals of teachers as expressed in stories from the past, telling of a fundamental turning points based on an interaction with a teacher, or any such account, the code of *images, stories and legends of teachers* was applied.

The ways teachers see themselves within the society is a yet another central characteristic of the social imaginary. We obtain a wider sense of our understanding within the work, the way we conceive of our social surroundings, and how we fit with others within the group by way of the social imaginary. the code *personification* will signify the way teachers see themselves within the social imaginary and will be used when teachers tell their own stories, speak about how teachers should be, and tell of their past experiences.

Finally, in order to take into consideration the ways that the modern social imaginary can be contrary to the expected actions of a teacher, we must consider the 'contradictions.' For Taylor, there is a moral order in society which permeates and alters it (2007: 28). In the

social imaginary, when we are inside of it, it appears to be the only one conceivable (Ibid, 17). Instead, there is a conformism to the social order that is expected and rules to be obeyed (Ibid, 18). Accordingly, it is important to include ways in which teachers step outside the typical and normal boundaries the social imaginary has set, and behave in ways that are not expected. The code for these types of behaviors is called *contradictions*, which will capture the ways in which teachers may fall outside of the expected set of norms set by the society.

Coding for emotional labor included the three key components that make up the primary properties of Arlie Russel Hochschild's (2012) concept and expanded upon by Ashforth and Humphrey (1993). The notion of 'caring' focuses that part of producing a comfortable feeling in others, and an act of caring for others in a safe space (Hochschild, 2012: 7). Acts of caring are built into the profession of teaching, and these rules are understood, expected, and required to meet the goals (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). By caring we mean the ways in which teachers are represented as kind, supportive, and giving in the news. Therefore, in any texts by journalists that refer to caring aspects, references to kindness, generosity and nurturing, will be coded as *caring*.

Secondly, 'dedication' represents the qualities of emotional labor that comes with, as Hochschild states, "seeming to 'love the job' becomes part of the job" (2012: 6) and appearing to genuinely enjoy all aspects of being a teacher (Ibid). Teachers are expected to maintain and exhibit a sense of commitment to the children in their charge. In addition, in the act of playing the role of the expected, the teacher becomes that role (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993:102). In the exhibition of the role of teacher as one of unwavering devotion to the job, references to teaching as a calling, devotion, and enthusiasm for the work, will be coded as *dedication*.

Finally, 'sacrifice' is a key element to emotional labor. Hochschild confirms that there is a human cost to emotional labor (2012: 185). When one identifies to a large degree to the requirement of the job, there are risks of burnout (Ibid, 187; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993: 106). Attempts to separate oneself from their work in order to avoid burnout comes a sense of inauthenticity yet creating a "healthy estrangement" (Ibid, 188) delineates a clear separation of self from the role. In addition, this estrangement incites anxiety in the failure to satisfy requirements creating a dependence on identification with the role (Ibid). Any references to

the expense made by teachers in that of health, personal finances, and time above and beyond that of the requirements of employment will be coded as *sacrifice*.

Together, these codes allow for a systematic analysis of the media stories about teachers, in terms of social imaginary and emotional labor. By analyzing these texts through the prism of these two concepts, the coding scheme allows me to identify key media narratives relating to the social imaginary and emotional labor of teachers, as well as where they intersect. In addition, this method of analysis allows for a comparison of media representations of teachers at the local and national level. Through doing so, the analysis considers the material ways in which these abstract concepts have an impact on the real experiences of teachers.

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1: Results

This thesis examines the modern social imaginary of teachers in the United States. It asks how the national and local news media plays a role in producing, reproducing, and maintaining the social imaginary and how this is related to teacher's experiences associated with emotional labor. Additionally, it looks at the way these issues are heightened in the Covid-19 pandemic. To examine these issues, an in-depth qualitative analysis was conducted on the content of 120 news stories about teachers, across both local and national NBC news affiliates. Below, quotes with WRAL signal content from the local affiliate, where as content described with NBC stems from the national affiliate.

The findings suggest that teachers are expected to maintain a close connection with the children in distance classrooms in a crisis. In addition, when reflecting on their experiences, teachers tend to adopt religious overtones and often speak about teaching as a 'calling,' or something that they were expected to undertake. As will be discussed, this often contributes to gender disparities and teacher pay. Finally, my analysis suggests that a false social imaginary was cultivated to understand and justify the ways teachers are expected to respond to a crisis situation and be resilient in the face of this pandemic.

The analysis revealed differences between local and national stations associated with the social imaginary. In particular, the local stories generally were coded at higher degree, and some codes stood out considerably. *Personification* and *dedication* were significantly more abundant in the local level, and *contradictions* was represented much higher at the national level. There were differences in the relationships relative to the national and the local levels, with largest distinction between the way the teachers see themselves within the American social imaginary as represented by *personification*. In addition, the representations of emotional labor, particularly in quotes by teachers themselves in their statements to journalists, were high at the local level.

In the following, I provide a descriptive account of each code, followed by an analytical discussion of the thesis' findings. The modern social imaginary is, as Taylor (2007: 23) states "shared by large groups of people, if not the whole of society." Therefore, the quotes

collected for this analysis are from a broad spectrum of society, including reporters, teachers, parents, administrators, politicians, among others.

4.1.1: Social Imaginary

Analysis of the social imaginary revealed several key findings in the representation of the expectations and normative beliefs regarding teachers. For all of the codes, the local news stories were coded more frequently and were represented significantly higher. This is with the exception of *contradictions*.

Expectations

Key themes that arose in the analysis of *expectation* were those associated with teacher resilience, innovation, and compassion. First, in the representations of the *expectation* of resilience of teachers and the innovation they exhibit in the classroom were, there was a strong depiction of teachers as needed to address and overcoming the obstacles that the pandemic presented, with clear suggestions of this being the predictable behavior of a teacher. This was exemplified in statements such as:

One of the things that we learned first as we are preparing for our teaching career is teachers monitor and adjust and that is just what we have done, without any professional development, without any time really to prepare.

- Carol, teacher (WRAL)

Analysis for *expectation* also revealed the way news media illustrated the importance of teachers in society and the essential role they play in the lives of children. Data revealed teachers generally are seen as living up to these expectations, warranting praise, appreciation, and recognition. This was demonstrated in many statements throughout the data:

We need to really appreciate what they're doing 'cause what they're doing is going way above and beyond what they thought that they would be doing.

-Mariah, teacher (NBC)

In addition to the statements of the importance of teachers, data analysis revealed extreme praise and glorification of their important role in society. Representations of gratitude, adoration, appreciation, especially in the face of the pandemic, at times elevating their status to heroic:

Teachers should be placed at the head of the line along with other frontline workers. They should be able to teach at a safe place and expand the minds and the opportunities of our children.

-Vice President Kamala Harris (NBC)

Stories, Myths and Legends

Another key aspect of the social imaginary is the *stories, myths, and legends* a society tells about itself. In the deeper normative images, the way people imagine their social surroundings is built into the stories a society tells in the understanding of teachers. Each of these (i.e. *stories, myths, legends*) are distinct forms of narrative that can have different properties, and can have differing theoretical applications. However, for the purposes of this study, they are treated as one group, as they work to achieve similar roles in the social imaginary (myths and legends are subsets of stories). Undoubtedly, these aspects function together as a way of fostering the social imaginary and circulating it throughout society.

The data unveiled significantly more stories and legends portrayed in the local news media than that of the national news. These *stories, myths and legends* primarily focus on the dedication and support provided by teachers, and sacrifices that are made, at times contrary to their own well-being. Stories such as the teacher who takes time from her personal life to drive a teen to college interview:

Shaffer brought her to a college interview when she needed someone to go with her. To Shaffer, arts education is a two-way street that allows teachers to learn even as they're teaching students.

-Reporter (NBC)

Educators saved him during a tough childhood. Now he's teacher of the year.

-Reporter (NBC)

Many stories, myths and legends included the role teachers play in the enormous role and responsibility of bringing up the next generation of citizens and building up the self-esteem of kids. An illustrative example is:

Every year, she tells her students that they're the best class ever, knowing that what they believe is what they'll become.

-Reporter (NBC)

And finally, there was a large representation of the *stories, myths, and legends* of heroics of teachers in the pandemic:

In March, when a lot of the teachers stepped up, went above and beyond to be there for their students, the teachers were praised as heroes.

- Gabriela, teacher (NBC)

Personification

In the instances of *personification*, the way people imagine this social existence of themselves within a society is another foundational aspect of the social imaginary. How teachers see themselves within the society, how they should be, and how they think other teachers should act were represented in the data in a noteworthy manner. Teachers were quoted copiously throughout the data in speaking about themselves in their roles. There were several themes that resounded in the *personification* code. The first was that of love for their jobs and teaching as a ‘calling’ as an important component of being a teacher. Journalists presented quotes by teachers as loving what they do and have a desire to be with the children every day.

I love my job and love people that I work with.

-Christina, teacher (WRAL)

In addition, the responsibility of caring for children were featured prominently. Themes around teacher *personification* also recognized the responsibility of caring for children and of raising future citizens, and the concern for the care of children in their charge.

No matter what these kids become, they are going to be citizens somewhere, and we want them to be good citizens.

-Kelly, teacher (WRAL)

Many quotes also centered on how children have a way of teaching the teachers. References to teachers stating what they have learned from the children:

My students have taught me more about life and about being a human being than any book I’ve ever read or any course I’ve ever taken.

-Lisanne, teacher (WRAL)

Contradictions

The ways teachers behave contrary to expected and a deviation from the social imaginary of teachers were analyzed as a *contradiction*. The national level had significantly more references to *contradictions* than that of the local. This correlates with the national level data

containing significantly more stories that were negative, relating in criminal and abusive activities by teachers. For example:

No teacher supposed to put their hands on no child. Period.
- Parent (NBC)

Summary of Social Imaginary

The social imaginary of teachers was heavily represented within the data. The social imaginary of teachers that was represented in the news stories analyzed tended to emphasize *expectations* of resilience, adoration, and appreciation. Particularly *stories, myths, and legends* illustrated themes such as exhibited heroism and raising up the next generation. *Personification* showed examples of love of job and commitment to children. Finally, *contradiction* revealed incidences of abusive behavior to children. Significant overlap of the social imaginary with emotional labor was found as the will be discussed later in the chapter.

4.1.2: Emotional Labor

There were numerous indications in the findings regarding the ways news media represents how teachers exhibit emotional labor in the care for school children. Again, local news allowed for more codes for emotional labor. The data was analyzed to better understand the relationships between the codes for the social imaginary and emotional labor.

Dedication

The code of *dedication* was highly represented in the local data at a rate twice that of the national. Many representations showed that local teachers were committed to education and the children in their classroom.

Educators have been on the front lines of this pandemic from the beginning, making the meals, adapting the curriculum, serving the food and checking in on their students' emotional and physical well-being.
- Mark Jewell, President of The North Carolina Association of Educators (WRAL)

These were references to the rewarding nature of teaching work, making a difference in the lives of children, and going above and beyond for their students and communities.

You cannot imagine how rewarding this profession is. I think you need to have passion for what you do. When you find that passion, you just have to do it every day single day of your life.

- Eddie, teacher (WRAL)

Caring

Caring is an essential aspect of the concept of emotional labor. Doing the work of care emerged as an important characteristic of the representation of teachers. In comparing local to national, there were more instances of caring codes at the local level. Within this coding scheme, several key themes emerged. During the course of coding, there were a significant number of references to *connection*, in an emotional way, and the need for teachers to be connected to their students.

It's important to just have a little bit of normalcy and connection.

-Parent (WRAL)

The analysis also revealed references to the 'heart' of a teacher, the word reappearing frequently in a metaphorical sense, to represent the care teachers have for their students.

There was nothing else I wanted to do. It's where my heart has always been.

-Jeanne, teacher (WRAL)

Sacrifice

The third and final code for emotional labor entailed that of *sacrifice*. There were many instances of *sacrifice* emerging from the data, as this research happened during the time of school closings and Covid-19, and news media continually highlighted the sacrifices teachers make. Some of these instances were about teachers leaving the profession, sacrificing their livelihood because of the challenges of online teaching and the pandemic.

One teacher said she will be leaving the district after a special request for accommodations she made due to Covid-19 concerns was denied.

- Reporter (WRAL)

Also, analysis revealed teachers have strong feelings of sadness and emotional suffering:

Reporter: *Knowing that her videos are making a difference in at least one child's life makes it all worth it.*

Hannah, teacher: *That's kind of what I've had to remind myself of when I get, like, really down. That one of my kids, former kids, a child anywhere is hearing an adult read and that's heartwarming to know that I'm reaching them somehow someway.*
(WRAL)

Yet another theme was the unsafe conditions that teachers are being placed in during the pandemic:

There seems to be a lot of pressure from on high pushing folks into an unsafe situations, and that includes educators, students and everyone who works in public schools.

-Carlos, teacher (WRAL)

Summary on Emotional Labor Results

The coding for emotional labor in the data showed that there were many overlaps in the coding of the data associated with the social imaginary, indicating a correlation between the two concepts and how they relate to American teachers. The data revealed a large representation of examples of emotional labor of teachers in the media, with *dedication* illustrated to a great extent. Emotional labor of teachers in the news stories analyzed revealed *dedication* themes regarding making a commitment to children and making a difference in their lives. Codes for *caring* revealed a need for connection, and themes of the health. And finally, in the theme of *sacrifice* there was extra stress and teachers being forced out of the job.

4.2: Discussion

This qualitative content analysis of local and national news stories brought out three key findings that help to answer the research question regarding how the modern social imaginary of teachers is represented in media. The pandemic response to education has only highlighted existing problems within education. In the intersection of the multiple key components of the concepts of the social imaginary and emotional labor as represented in media, several observations came to light that can be understood and elaborated in a critical way. First, news media stories represented a need for teachers and children to maintain an emotional connection with each other. Secondly, it was evident in the data that news media stories represented the ‘love’ teachers have for working with children and depicted teaching as a ‘calling’. And lastly, analysis of the data revealed that teachers were expected to be resilient and able to overcome very difficult challenges, often in heroic ways. In the following, I discuss each of these themes in light of social imaginary, emotional labor, and how the two intersect.

4.2.1: Expectations of Connection 'That little bit of that connection'

My analysis of the data showed that teachers are often overwhelmed with a great deal of emotional responsibility for the children in their classroom and this feeling is exacerbated by the pandemic. There was a clear indication that teachers are expected to be acutely aware of the mental health of the children, signs of abuse or hunger, as well as the risk of gun violence in schools. In the intersection between the codes of *expectation* and *caring*, and at times *personification*, I found that teachers were represented in news media as having (and needing to have) a strong sense of connection with the children to do their work effectively. This connection is often an emotional association, one that empathetically links the teachers to the children.

In relation to being out of the classroom and the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers were represented as missing the children, the dynamics of the classroom, and the close relationships with the children. The theme of *caring* and connection repeatedly arose from the data as something that teachers expected from themselves and each other, and society and institutions expected from them. During the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers had difficulty maintaining close connections (particularly emotional) to students through a computer screen. While a burdensome task before the pandemic, this became increasingly challenging with online schooling. For example, in a statement by an NBC reporter about a teacher and the ways in which there is an *expectation* for connection with the students, teachers are expected to be innovative and creative in order to maintain this connection:

Many of us, especially teachers, are trying to connect with their students from a distance. Christine Van Czyska introduces us to a band director in Wisconsin whose latest attempt to reach students is now making the rounds on the Internet. With about a dozen instruments and 18 parts, this Wheatland Center School band director goes viral on YouTube playing Bohemian Rhapsody.

-Reporter (NBC)

In addition to reporters perpetuating an *expectation*, administrators of schools also speak of other educators and maintain similar expectations. Representatives of institutions place expectations of emotional labor on their workers in the statements made in the public sphere. As Taylor (2007: 84) states, in the public sphere “people are seen as linked in a common space of discussion through media.” This is how the institutions share their *expectations* of

caring, where the social imaginary and emotional labor intersect. As one administrator spoke of the teachers in her school:

Principal: *Our first focus right now is just making sure that our kids are feeling safe.*

Reporter: *If you're looking for signs of positivity, kindness, and love, we found them staged for a parade in an elementary school parking lot.*

Principal: *It's a great way just for us to connect and build those relationships. That it doesn't mean we just have to be in school to have these relationships with their kids....it's a great way for our staff to connect but also to connect with our students but it's just mentally really encouraging to see they are staying in touch. They miss the kids too. (WRAL)*

Teachers are expected to feel emotionally bonded to students. This is demonstrated in the way that administrators and reporters discuss the teachers' response to the pandemic and place an *expectation* of feeling on the teachers as a collective. This reproduces the social imaginary, in both its factual content but also its normative content (Taylor: 2007, 24). There is an understanding within society of how things normally are, but also an expectation of how things should be. In addition, institutions put expectations on teachers to do emotional labor. In the case of "institutional emotional management", the agency is removed from the individual and traded for the will of the institution (Hochschild, 2012: 48-9). The principal, in this case, acts as a guide to feeling rules, arranging the way the institution wants employees to feel and be seen (Ibid, 50). By making statements in the public sphere, cues are taken by teachers, in the management of their own feeling. Institutions announce the care and connection teachers have for the children, but also what is wanted to be exhibited in the public sphere. We can see another example of the same here of an institutional spokesperson, a school administrator, making feeling rules for teachers:

We want our students to feel like they are connecting with the teacher. They are probably hearing the stress of their families and their parents talking and we want them to see a positive face every day, going through a routine with them of a learning example.

-Marianne, Principal (WRAL)

Most citizens are struggling in the pandemic, some suffering from illness or grief themselves. Administrators are necessitating feeling rules, or guiding the emotions of teachers by obligating an emotional exchange (Hochschild, 2012: 56). In addition, they are demanding surface acting from teachers, in which the teacher is not necessarily experiencing the feeling, but appearing to feel them, as a type of performance (Hochschild, 2012: 38). In the

exemplification of connection, teachers personified themselves as needing connection with the children and struggling with the separation. At the intersection of *personification* and *expectation*, teachers exhibited a deep longing to be back in the classroom setting to maintain relationships.

I do miss hugging them.... I do miss, you know, just that human connectivity, which is missing. So it's kind of hard.

-Katherine, teacher (WRAL)

Teachers are expected and expressed a need for the connection with the students. This connection is not represented as a job qualification, but as an innate human quality being done in the context of her employment. While it must be acknowledged that teachers may authentically feel this longing, it should also be recognized that some aspects of these self-representations are the functions of expectations put on teachers by the institution and society at large. Teachers are, in this case, “enacting the social” (Couldry and Hepp, 2017: 3). In a performative way, they are communicating the social, that of the social imaginary, through the medium of the news media. The media, in turn, affects the social imaginary.

The social norms associated with teaching and teachers are established through expectations, and tend to feel more authentic when conforming to these rules set by organizations (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Teachers are presented as if they are not personally fulfilled without a deep connection. This representation becomes an important part of their identity, one that rests within themselves and results from a pressure to identify with the normative roles (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). A common and reciprocated expectation is on display. For Taylor, (2007:168) “it matters to each of us as we act that others are there, as witnesses of what we are doing and thus as codeterminers of the meaning of our action.” Thus, teachers express their roles and identities to the whole of society through the media and in turn how they are represented, and give them meaning (Hall, 1997: 3). Therefore, a large part of the social expectations placed on them is also intensified by the way teachers themselves understand and characterize their role in society.

These connections between teacher and children are important in the care work that is expected of teachers, especially at this time of Covid-19. In addition to their teaching responsibilities, many teachers are tasked with additional training related to the pandemic.

Training in grief counseling and emotional support has become commonplace for teachers. These tasks and responsibilities are being placed on them without additional compensation, instead taken on as an expectation, and added on to their training. To facilitate this care work, having an emotional connection with children becomes necessary for teachers to follow through with these responsibilities. It also placed additional emotional burdens on teachers to identify and approach children who are facing mental challenges or physical dangers and their parents. One teacher expressed:

If you have a child in your life, if you're a grandparent or aunt or an uncle, please check on their mental health, social and emotional health of our kids. We are underestimating the trauma of this year kids are dealing with. A lot of the kids have faced loss and just being outside of school.
- Alex, teacher (NBC)

In this representation from the national news, praise for the education of the teacher was demonstrated, but no indication of an in-depth discussion on why these fundamental human needs should be the responsibility of the teacher or whether this was related to broader social conditions or processes, such as access to resources and school funding decisions. There is a clear signal that the needs of children are socially important and that there is an expectation that teachers need to step in and meet any outstanding needs and compensate for any social shortcomings. This expectation results in a tendency to increase the workload of teachers to include care work and emotional labor.

There was no critical examination in the analyzed materials regarding the underlying sociopolitical mechanisms that might increase burdens on teachers. The lack of discussion can conceal the nature of a significant social problem for teachers and society. These representation in media are not simply ideas in space but, as Couldry and Hepp state (2017: 3), they are “the *material* processes (objects, linkages, infrastructures, platforms) through which communication, and the construction of meaning, take place.” As a result, teachers are often left with increased obligations and workload where the allocation of funds and resources fall short. These are the material processes that emerge within and from the social imaginary, the meaning given to teachers, the expectation of care, and their consequences.

4.2.2: Loving What You Do and the ‘Nature’ of Teachers ‘Waking up with a job that you love is a gift’

In the intersection between the social imaginary components of *personification* and the emotional labor theme of *dedication*, teachers expressed themselves as having deep attachments to the profession of teaching, manifested in a number of ways and using various forms of language to express the same idea. In some instances, they expressed teaching as a ‘calling’, other times making financial and physical sacrifices to do the work that they do, or voicing a deep love for their profession. Teachers articulated the rewarding nature of the profession, such as the joy it brings them to be working with children every day. Teachers were represented as dedicated to the children, and committed to their job.

I’ve always felt that I wanted to work with kids. It was just something that I was natural and good at, and I just enjoy it so much, and I can’t imagine doing anything else.

-Anna, teacher (WRAL)

In addition, they expressed their jobs as ‘a calling.’ Few secular professions are described in this way, but usually they are those that are considered the noble occupations that are typically low paying and altruistic. In doing so, teachers are characterized as destined for teaching, as if there was nothing else they were intended to do or could do.

Reporter: *One educator says that working with kids is her calling.*

Rayshawn, teacher: *‘There was never anything else I wanted to do. It is where my heart has always been.’ (WRAL)*

The word ‘calling’ has religious roots, but is now commonly used in everyday society. The idea of a calling emerged from Protestant religious sects and the belief that each individual has a moral obligation to fulfill a task in order to work for divine glory of God. The common use of the term in recent times is an example of religious, in this case Christian, influence over secular society and beliefs. Just as religious texts carry *stories, myths, and legends*, so too do teachers in the way they create narratives about themselves to perpetuate the commonly held beliefs of the collective societies. These characterizations imply that their choice of profession was in some way predestined, or as an inevitability due to innate characteristics. Yet, practically speaking, teachers are trained professionals. Developing the skills to teach does not happen innately or by sheer passion, but with successful completion of degree programs in education, training, and years of experience.

There are important implications to this aspect of the social imaginary of teachers. This view of teaching as a calling suggests that when teachers struggle, a common conclusion would be that they weren't meant for the profession, or 'called' to do the work. Instead of providing resources, additional training and assistance that support teacher growth during this time of crisis, the responsibility is easily shifted on the shoulders of teachers and on whether the teacher is suitable for the job. The risks are that dedicated teachers withdraw from teaching at a time when there are existing teacher shortages.

It's not easy to leave a job that you have loved for 15 years knowing that it is your calling but what else was I gonna do?
-Elisa, teacher (WRAL)

Propagating the myth of being 'called' to teach can have consequences beyond teacher resignations. The *personification* of teachers in this way perpetuates the social imaginary of the teaching profession as a 'calling', as part of their (human) nature. Critical theorists, such as those associated with the Frankfurt School, considered culture to be contested, in a state of continuous struggle (Hesmondhalgh: 2019: 16). As exhibited in this case study, like most Americans, teachers are in a state of struggle. The social imaginary of the teacher is cultural, and, as Marx and Engles warned, risks "turning culture into nature" (Highmore: 2016: 30). By this they meant that a cultural phenomenon that is socially constructed can become reified, thus mistaken as a concrete reality and our 'human nature.' Socially constructed conditions become seen as forces of nature, and thus inevitabilities. The consequences of such a social imaginary easily shifts an increasing burden of work and responsibility, and particularly care work, to individuals, in this case, teachers. The social imaginary is "shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society" (Taylor, 2007: 23). The stories and legends of teachers motivates (or forces) them to work harder and longer hours, contributing to potential teacher burnout. Data analysis revealed indications of teacher burnout:

Teachers are reporting high levels of stress and burnout around the country, including in Kansas, Michigan, and Arkansas. In Utah, the Salt Lake Tribune reported, principals say their teachers are having panic attacks while juggling both... When teachers are under a lot of stress, they are also a lot more likely to leave the profession, which is a very bad outcome.
-Reporter (NBC)

Perpetuating the myth that teachers have an inherent nature and were meant to teach is also concern in relation to issues of gender equality and pay. The majority of teachers in public

schools—about 75 percent—are women. The hazard of representing teaching as a ‘calling’ and one that individuals are destined for depending on their innate character, is that it can perpetuate a social imaginary of women as inherently caring, and this is within their nature. That is, it essentializes nurturing and caring as a necessary (or natural) characteristic of what it means to be a woman, and a teacher. As Taylor (2007: 17) states, “once we are within the social imaginary, there seems to be no other way, this being the only one that we can conceive life.” Accepting the role as teaching as a ‘calling’ adheres to a particular essentialist social imaginary regarding women and teachers, perpetuating the narrative. Linking dedication to jobs that are emotionally intensive to women’s work results in it becomes expected, entering the realm of the social imaginary.

In the intersection between *expectation*, *personification* and *dedication*, journalists represented teachers with a deep commitment to their role as a teacher. In the burdens being placed on teachers at this time, characterizing them as destined for the profession can be problematic. Teaching is an occupation like any other, and as discussed earlier, mainly taken on by women. By imposing what essentially amounts to the requirement of unending dedication on them, it implies that they should work purely for the joy and personal reward. Instead, the vast majority of teachers work out of necessity to provide for their families. While it is an ideal that individuals could work purely for the personal delight it brings, this is not the decisive factor that shapes the modern labor market, or broader economic system.

It is well known that women and girls are socialized to use emotion in different ways than men and boys (Hochschild, 2017:163). Women are more often expected to work in roles that promote a ‘softer side’, whereas men are often encouraged to take on professions in which aggression can be used strategically (Ibid). From an early age, girls and boys are trained differently to manage emotions, foretelling their later professional roles (Ibid). In addition, women sometimes take on teaching jobs because it allows them to be available to their children after school, crossing the divide from job to home. Thus, women are also commonly taking on more of the emotional responsibilities in the home while their male counterparts work at higher paying positions with less emotional burdens (Fraad, 2009).

Where the intersection of *personification* and *stories, myths and legends* and *dedication* come together, teachers are presenting a veneration of their work. Teachers, in their performance to

journalists, are representing an idealized impression of themselves (Goffman 1959: 23). Sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) argues that “when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole” (Ibid). In this way, the social imaginary intersects with the presentation of self. The public, and the idea of the teacher, expects a person who loves being with children every day, and the teachers tend to deliver on these expectations. The way we imagine ourselves within a society is an integral part of the social imaginary (Taylor, 2007: 23). How teachers perform within that social imaginary, as presented in media, allows a better understanding of the contribution of teachers to changing or intensifying it.

I've always felt that I wanted to work with kids. It was just something that I was natural and good at, and I just enjoy it so much, and I can't imagine doing anything else.

-Anna, teacher (WRAL)

Application of Goffman's (1959) concept of “front stage/back stage” theories of performance can shed light on the ways teachers perform these identities in media. Hochschild (2012) draws on Goffman in her concepts of deep acting and surface acting, as we see teachers have a strong tendency to characterize themselves as committed and passionate. This ties to the social imaginary in the *expectation* society has of teachers to maintain that *sacrifice* and commitment to children. Teachers tend to expect it from themselves in their front stage performance.

While many employment conditions require some degree of emotional labor, only some require the public performance of that labor (Hochschild: 2017: 153-4). In the case of teachers, especially at the local level, there was a sense of performance that teachers felt the need to enact. In this way, where the social imaginary of teachers and how they see themselves within the society and the public views of emotional labor intersect, creates a mediated performance of identity. This analysis highlights how teachers represent themselves in the public sphere. Teachers, when quoted by journalists, repeatedly stated a similar theme: that of teaching as a ‘calling’, something they were born to do. Hochschild (2017: 6) addresses this very notion of the way the worker embodies the personification of the way teachers see themselves in the context of emotional labor. Therefore, seeming to “love what you do” becomes a required part of the job (Hochschild, 2012: 6).

Another consequence of characterizing teachers in this way is associated with neoliberal ideologies and policies of austerity and asking teacher to do more with less. These existing structural issues have only been exacerbated in the pandemic:

Teachers have always bought things for their classrooms. You know, it's one thing when we say we're not funded and I'm buying my own classroom library books. But it's a completely different thing when we're talking, you know, a pandemic. I have colleagues who have purchased face masks. I have colleagues who are looking into building plexiglass barriers or PVC piping with shower curtains.
-Sarah, teacher (WRAL)

Corporate media power plays a role in the representation of teachers as resilient and heroic in the media. Representations such as these show the teacher as selfless and highly committed to children and their profession. Powerful entities that have pushed a neoliberal agenda of austerity, lower taxes, and smaller government have an interest in defunding and privatizing education (McChesney, 2008: 243). This was clearly represented in the choice of Betsy DeVos as the Secretary of Education in the US during the Trump Administration. Secretary DeVos had a history of working to push a neoliberal agenda in educational policy in her home state of Michigan and continued this at the national level (Kaplan and Owings, 2018).

The neoliberal push to privatization within the education system affects numerous aspects of the teaching experience, including the availability of funds for care work positions in the school, such as psychologists and nurses. In addition, teachers that are heroic are able to do more work with less resources. This becomes part of the job. From a social imaginary such as this, using personal time and funds to advance the well-being of children is seen as a noble task, rather than an act of exploitation or perpetuating gender inequalities.

4.2.3: Resilience and a False Social Imaginary ***'The heart of a teacher... to do whatever it takes'***

Teachers were consistently represented as resilient, as able to handle the challenges the pandemic has delivered in addition to the existing problems prior to Covid-19. While it is true that resiliency is necessary for the whole of society during a pandemic, in the case of teachers, my analysis showed that there is a high and disproportionate expectation on teachers to meet a myriad of existing and new challenges. In the intersection of the social imaginary concepts, that of *dedication* and the emotional labor concept of *sacrifice*, a correlation was found that revealed the resilience of teachers. In addition, in the case of

personification, teachers play a big role in the perpetuation of their own social imaginary in the way they characterize themselves.

With the concerns around the virus and the physical and mental health of children and parents, there has been political pressure and confusion to open schools. In addition, a rapid pivot from in-person to online school has tested teachers and schools, often beyond the resources (both in terms of personnel and funding) allocated to them. With school funding a continually contested issue, and an essential aspect of neoliberal austerity policies both nationally and locally, additional responsibilities have been heaped on teachers. In an example of both *personification* and *dedication* and *sacrifice*, teachers praised each other for their ability to overcome the trials the pandemic brought. In the media, teachers' resiliency is celebrated in their abilities to do more with less.

What has struck me most during these past nine months is just how incredibly resilient, nimble and innovative we have all become during this very difficult time.
-Mary Ann, President, Public School Forum of North Carolina (WRAL)

The analysis shows how news media portrays teachers as coming through with innovative ways to continue to teach online, keeping the children engaged and interested. This Teacher of the Year said:

This has been a great challenge but, you know, like all teachers across North Carolina, teachers rise to the challenge of any kind of circumstance that we have and one of the things that we learned first as we are preparing for our teaching career is that teachers monitor and adjust. And that is just what we have done without any professional development, without any time, really, to prepare. Teachers all across the state have really risen to the occasion of serving kids digitally and from afar.
-Carol, teacher (WRAL)

What is notable in this excerpt is the mention of the lack of professional development provided for managing the hardships of the pandemic. Teachers expressed being unequipped to handle the immense amount of grief from children, in addition to their own personal lives. This teacher insightfully points out that teachers are not fully qualified to carry out these responsibilities:

We're not trained medical professionals.
-Alex, teacher (NBC)

Some teachers have had grief training to handle the many children who are experiencing death and loss in their families:

While support staff, such as social workers, school psychologists, and other mental health professionals, have helped alleviate some of the emotional load from the pandemic, there's a high level of cumulative grief, and teachers are finding a need to be more equipped....Dealing with grief isn't new for teachers who have a baseline for how to counsel children, but the nature of a pandemic has grossly changed the scale.
-Reporter (NBC)

Taylor asks “can an imaginary be false, meaning that it distorts or covers over certain crucial realities? Take our sense of ourselves as equal citizens in a democratic state...engaging in a cover-up, averting our gaze from various excluded and disempowered groups or imagining that their exclusion is their own doing” (Taylor, 2007: 183). The societal expectations and the excessive burdens placed on teachers exemplifies the false social imaginary, as well as the false consciousness, of the American teacher. Those that struggle to succeed in the classroom are viewed by others as personal failures who didn’t work hard enough and didn’t have the necessary ingenuity. Often, teachers look within and blame themselves for their own failures instead of looking toward the failures of the system and, ultimately, the underlying culture. On the contrary, other teachers deviate from accepting the role of ‘super people’, as one teacher labelled them, and quietly take on the additional responsibilities. Alternatively, they push back against the social imaginary and critically assess the expectations:

We don't want to be seen like people who are saving the world by going in and doing our jobs.
-Mariah, teacher (NBC)

Instead of accepting the role set within the social imaginary of the selfless and dedicated teacher, this teacher is communicating frustration of being seen as society’s savior. In this way, they may gain the desired response, that of more public attention and allocation of resources to be paid to the plight of teachers in the classroom in the pandemic and representing a kind of ‘collective esteem and solidarity’ (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). For Taylor, (2007:183) “The falsity cannot be total” and some people will participate in ‘self rule.’” Some step outside the boundaries of what is considered the expectation of teachers’ level of sacrifice and dedication and examine the issues further. Here, one teacher expresses frustration with the pandemic response to the plight of teachers:

I know it is extremely negative thinking, but I don't feel appreciated by the parents who demanded we get back to work during a pandemic with seemingly zero regard for how we felt about it. I feel as if teachers are the sacrificial guinea pigs.

-Anonymous, teacher (NBC)

In the case of the display rules of emotional labor, this teacher is stepping out of the typical norms and expected behavior expressing her authentic self. Social imaginaries are not just imaginary, there are material consequences to the ways in which people see the world. As expressed in this case, teachers are not pretending to be caring, but doing what Hochschild (2012: 35-7) calls “deep acting”, an expression of authentic emotion, in which teachers aren’t appearing to be strong and resilient, but expressing true feeling:

Everything weighed on Tart so much that he posted on Facebook, "Well, it's official. I have hit the depression mark."

-Reporter (WRAL)

Hochschild (2012) cautions against the commodification of feeling and the risks of institutional expectation of feeling. When teacher struggles are unacknowledged by institutions, there is a potential estrangement from feeling and can have psychological consequences (Ibid, 37). This emotional labor may produce emotive dissonance and harm one's feeling of authentic identity (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). When institutions place excessive burdens on teachers as they do, it makes the teachers more exposed to, as Hochschild (2012:8) says, “the social engineering of her emotional labor and reduces her control over that labor.” These institutions include the workplace, that of schools, but also social institutions, including media.

4.3: Summary

The social imaginary of teachers is evident in the American media landscape. It is apparent in the ways reporters characterize teachers in their news stories as well as the expectation within those stories from parents, administrators, and authorities, among others. There are expectations placed on teachers and narratives in media that illustrate the ways that the broader society expects teachers to be resilient and dedicated. Further, the degree with which teachers participate in the social imaginary of themselves is an unexpected finding, at times intensifying the expectations placed upon them. Teachers are seen as possessing an inherent quality making them especially suited for their work in education. My analysis revealed the ways in which in the United States teachers fit within the social imaginary, and how the

teachers see themselves within that framework. The modern social imaginary provides an important basis for the societal understanding of teachers in a mediated society. The concept suggests there is a commonly held belief with the social imaginary, such as that of the teacher, but in Taylor's work less attention is paid to the ways those within the society take such a prominent role in the perpetuation of their own standing within it. This research found that teachers, in their public sphere presence, spread the social imaginary of themselves to a great deal, often putting greater expectations on themselves than the whole of society. In addition, the social imaginary can be oppressive in the stereotypes it can foster, especially those regarding gender.

Teachers perform emotional labor carrying out their work in education. This research lays claim that as a part of the social imaginary, emotional labor becomes an expectation of teachers, as it exists within the social imaginary. As an unexpected outcome of this research, each finding revealed elements of personification in the results. Often, teachers contribute a great deal to the expectations placed upon them. In the way they express and represent themselves within media, teachers assume the responsibilities of emotional labor. These representations can become problematic in the notion of the teaching profession characterized as the nature of teachers.

This analysis highlighted the ways that local news reporting is integral to the social imaginary. Federal funds intended for education are distributed to states for allocation to local districts. As discussed earlier, research shows that local news is more trusted by viewers than national news. This research indicated that the teacher representations of the social imaginary and emotional labor occur more frequently at the local level. The way that teachers are represented in media in local news can have material consequences for the allocation of resources. These resources could contribute to educational assistance to teachers and mental health counselling. The formation of the social imaginary at the local level can affect the way people feel about the teachers in their neighborhoods, who work with the children in their community.

By investigating the intersection of the components of the modern social imaginary and emotional labor, key findings were revealed about the ways in which teachers are represented in media. These representations include the ideas concerning what we expect from teachers and the meaning made from this sharing of the social imaginary. Teachers, in their capacity

as educators, are expected to have emotional connections with their students. In addition, when the three components of *expectation*, *caring* and *personification* were brought together, teacher themselves expected that emotional connection of themselves. In addition, where *personification* and *dedication* met, teachers represented themselves in media as referring to their work in education as a ‘calling’, taking on religious overtones and an inherent nature to being a teacher. Finally, where *expectation*, *sacrifice*, and *personification* intersected, it was found that teachers were expected to be resilient and make do with less, reflecting a false social imaginary.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research aimed to critically analyze the relationship between the modern social imaginary of American teachers in mainstream news media during the coronavirus pandemic, and the way this interacts with emotional labor in teachers' experiences. Through this approach, findings revealed how the social imaginary often disagrees with the romanticized view of the teacher. This analysis was developed at a national and local level, using Raleigh, North Carolina as a case study for a local context against a national context in the United States. Insight was gained into the way these two differ in the perpetuation of the social imaginary. Through a qualitative content analysis of WRAL (local) and NBC (national) news media, rich findings were gleaned that shined a light on the coronavirus pandemic and the expectations for the ongoing struggles of teachers.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of the way that the modern social imaginary plays a role in the real-life experiences of teachers. A political economic approach was also drawn upon to better understand the social dynamics associated with power relations, the social imaginary of teachers and their emotional labor. The representations and the modern social imaginary formation in media have both cultural and material outcomes for teachers. The findings of this research develop insights for understanding of the social processes that go into the mediated formations of the modern social imaginary.

Below, I will assess the findings in relation to the primary research questions as discussed in the introduction of this thesis:

5.1: How do local and national American news media represent the social imaginary of teachers?

This thesis operationalized the modern social imaginary of teachers in news media using the four key components of what makes up this social imaginary, that is: *expectation; stories, myths, and legends; personification; and contradictions*. In doing so, it shed light on the ways the media contributes to the construction of the modern social imaginary, providing a platform for the dissemination of information. The social imaginary is a powerful force in a culture. It can have far reaching effects on those within it. In modern mediated societies, our understanding of teachers tends to be more homogenized, with a greater intertwining of

groups and classes, and more aware of each other's existence (Taylor, 2007: 161). In this way, the universal expectation of teachers in society is often through mediated experiences.

The findings of this analysis indicated that news media promotes an expectation of teachers to be resilient in the difficult conditions of the pandemic. Administrators, politicians, and teachers, in the ways they communicate in the news, placed high expectations on teachers to maintain emotional connections with school children at a distance. In addition, media represented teachers with the narratives that propel a social imaginary, in the stories, myths, and legends told about them. Further, teachers were expected to love the work they do and 'called' to teach. Additionally, teachers were expected to make sacrifices, as shown in their resilience and ability to overcome the challenges of teaching in a pandemic.

The media plays a large part in the production and perpetuation of the social imaginary in that the media is entwined and increasingly inseparable from other aspects of everyday life (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 77). For most people in modern society, culture and information is mainly derived from media, and news media is an essential part of this information system. Therefore, media has a high degree of responsibility in the role it takes in society, in issues of democracy and culture (Lewis in Klaehn, 2010: 29). In discussions of educational issues and that of teachers, we can also say that the media system *is* part of our educational system (Ibid). In the case of the social imaginary, media plays a central role in teaching people what to expect from each other and themselves, and, important for this study, what to expect from teachers.

In times of crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the expectations on teachers are clearly an important social matter. Schools, and the teachers who work in them, are essential aspects of the modern culture and political economy. During the crisis, more responsibilities have been loaded on to teachers. Frequently, these higher expectations and duties in crisis can contribute to a new social imaginary. As Taylor (2007: 153) states, a "new imaginary doesn't just displace the old one" and it "reinterprets the key values of the older tradition but retains the sense of its origin in this earlier tradition." New and additional expectations have been placed on teachers during a time of crisis, which represented them as overcoming challenges and being resilient among the pandemic hardships. In doing so, these expectations often contributed to the development of new expectations.

It may be more likely, then, that a social imaginary of teachers, disseminated by media systems, can also be more regimented and uniform. These societal ideas are firmly rooted in the minds of the people within it. Therefore, the expectations placed on teachers in the general society can create difficulties in overlooking systemic problems for teachers. The concept of the social imaginary plays an important role in maintaining and supporting capitalist development in that, instead of looking toward the external sources of their distress, teachers often look inward, at themselves, at the individual. This motivates ways for self-improvement, but rarely recognizes the importance of structural conditions in producing social difficulties. This may help to stabilize the social system, for example with little interruption from protest, but the result is a great number of teachers struggling with their current state, facing serious challenges that affect them and the children they teach in myriad of ways.

5.2: In what way does American news media contribute to the social imaginary and expectation of emotional labor for teachers?

In this study, I found that news media represents teachers as inherently caring individuals. In addition, in their statements in the public sphere, teachers identified with the caring nature of the profession of teaching. The manner in which teacher personify themselves within media and the social imaginary indicates how teachers participate in the creating the social imaginary of their role, and they take on more responsibility of emotional labor. In the likening of their profession to a ‘calling’ and in highlighting the inherent nature of teachers, they are performing a particular role within the public space. Teachers provide an impression of how they wish to be seen as possessing the characteristics of these attributes of the care and inherent nature of their character (Goffman, 1959:10). Teachers are, as Abercrombie and Longhurst state, (1998: 95-6) “performing for an imagined audience.” In this performance, they contribute to the social imaginary of themselves, and, as a result, to the expectations society puts on them, including that of care work.

The research found that news media represents teachers in a manner that expects emotional labor work. This emotional labor was heightened in the pandemic with the increased needs from school children. The findings revealed that teachers were represented in news media by various members of society, including parents, politicians, administrations, and teachers, with expectations and narratives. There was an expectation of caring and connection with children. Also, teachers were seen as having an innate caring characteristic that allowed them to be

suitable for the profession of teaching. The key findings indicate that teachers play a large role in representing themselves within the social imaginary and being caring and emotionally connected to students. In addition, institutions, in their expectations and commodification of caring, risk teachers' alienation from feeling and burnout.

Women make up three quarters of the teacher workforce in American schools. In addition, education is notoriously underfunded and teachers underpaid. Representations of teaching as a 'calling' or possessing an inherent nature to teach contributes to a conception of care work as the domain of women. Conversely, working with children requires a variety of skills and knowledge. Likening teaching to a natural process or impulse suggests that the education and experience that are needed to be an effective teacher are superfluous. As a result, the care work needed for working with children, as Fraad (2003) states, "is not only uncompensated, it is financially punished." Jobs in care professions are consistently held by women and underpaid (Ibid). News media representations of teachers as inherently caring and born to teach can propagate myths that have detrimental effects on women and teacher pay.

This thesis contextualized the way that news media represents teachers in the public sphere. The social imaginary of teachers in news media and the emotional labor they do are clearly linked. It was evident that news media generally presented teachers as much more than simply educators of the nation's children, but necessary in playing a pivotal role in their emotional needs. Particularly in a time of crisis, additional emotional responsibilities have fallen on the backs of teachers, over and above the work they were doing before the pandemic began. The Covid-19 crisis has only highlighted the situation. The expectations placed on teachers coupled with emotional labor makes for an increased concern for teacher burnout. Cuts in school funding for essential resources for children's emotional needs mean teachers require additional training for serious mental health concerns. As the study illustrates, teachers are displayed in media as able to do more with less resources.

5.3: In relation to the two questions above, how do social relations of political-economic power and the media affect these developments of the social imaginary and emotional labor of teachers?

Media, power, and capital have the ability to influence how we think about education. Politicians and educational authorities have greater access to media outlets and information,

and the social imaginary of teachers is shared through mediated spaces. At the intersection of the social imaginary and emotional labor, we can look to structures of power within the media landscape that participate in the setting of the agenda on the reporting of news. We can see that the social imaginary and the emotional labor teachers do have material effects, particularly for the teachers themselves.

Findings for this case study indicate that the social imaginary of teachers in news media can have effects on gender roles and teacher pay in the likening it to a ‘calling.’ In addition, the expectation of resilience and innovative teaching techniques in online education can usher in austerity measures as has been seen in other crisis conditions. Adding care responsibilities to teachers’ duties allows for the elimination of the positions of nurses and accredited mental health professional in schools, with the intent on educational funding cuts. These representations and the social imaginary make the changes to education more easily accepted when the crisis is over. In my analysis, news media did not indicate a critical reflection on the adding of these duties or the systemic problems with these issues. In this way, the findings illustrated the ways in which the social imaginary has material effects beyond the imagined.

Private companies are already seeing financial opportunities presented by the pandemic, in media and educational technologies among other things. “Never let a good crisis go to waste” is a popular neo-liberal policymaking adage (Mazzucato, 2020). The Covid-19 crisis, for neo-liberals, is seen as an opportunity to transform the educational system. EdTech companies are capitalizing on the move to online schooling (Klein, 2020). The same is true of the labor of teachers who are being asked to do more with less. Past disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, ushered in drastic changes in the educational systems, which are seen as “exciting market opportunities” (Klein: 2007:6). In this way, we see that the social imaginary does not exist simply in the mediated public sphere, but has real world consequences in society.

In discussing the social imaginary, we must consider the local media and the degree of trust held for local news sources. As discussed above, local news is more trusted as compared to national news sources. The analysis found that the social imaginary and emotional labor is represented more frequently at the local level. Local news reporting becomes important because allocation of resources that come from the federal level are distributed locally. This makes the local a crucial aspect of the social imaginary. Therefore, local news media becomes significant in the ways that the social imaginary and emotional labor are interpreted

by viewers. While national media commonly has greater name recognition, the ways people think of teachers at the local level also impacts the allocation of funds to various educational and mental health needs. The ways in which the local people regard teachers in their immediate surroundings, and the impact they have in the places they live, can also influence the ways society regards teachers.

This research illustrates the relationship between the social imaginary and emotional labor of American teachers and the way that these are disseminated in news media. This case study is a glimpse of the broader social imaginary within the American media landscape. This gives us a warning on how crises can contribute or alter the social imaginary. As Flyvbjerg (2017: 166) suggests, social scientists should “take up problems that matter to the local, national, and global communities in which we live, and we must do it in ways that matter” and “focus on issues of values and power.” In relation to issues of gender pay, teacher burnout, and added emotional labor duties, this research has broader applications within the social context. In addition, the social imaginary can extend beyond borders, through media, and permeate other societies (Corner: 2011; Taylor: 2007). Therefore, broader implications exist for the ways that American neo-liberalism spreads through media to other parts of the world.

This research topic could be expanded for further study. Future research could use the application of the social imaginary and emotional labor in issues of race and gender in media. Additional research on social media could also contribute to the understanding of these issues. With the introduction of additional methods such as semi-structured interviews of teachers, reporters and administrators, a broadened understanding could be had of the mediated role of the social imaginary on the real-life experiences of people within the educational sphere. The media allows those in authority, including educational decision makers such as administrators and politicians, to have a platform to share their expectations for teachers. Corner (2011: 15) states that “most public and commercial organizations carry out their work, most obviously their publicity work, with the premise that media outputs can exert a significant degree of power over both public and corporate perceptions.” The power of media allows those in authority to disseminate their message and circulate and alter the social imaginary of teachers.

The role of the social imaginary and emotional labor of teachers have material consequences beyond the imagined. The cultural aspects, that of the social imaginary, have implications for

the real-world experiences of teachers (Higgins, 2001: 14). As such, capitalist development is an important element in the perpetuation of this social imaginary of the teacher. Williams contends that “any socialist account of culture must necessarily include conflict as a structural condition of it as a whole way of life” (Williams, 1981: 135). The concept of the social imaginary of teachers is a way of life. It permeates the American worldview, shaping people’s image and expectations of teachers and the education system. Therefore, casting theoretical attention to the emotional labor of teachers, particularly at a time of acute crisis, has shed valuable light on teacher’s experiences and how society represents them.

This thesis has shown how media often contributes to ways society perceives teachers and the ways they perceive themselves within it. Furthermore, taken together, these findings contribute to the body of knowledge of the social imaginary, showing how the media constructs narratives about teachers. The research contributes to the understanding how media plays a role the shaping of the modern social imaginary of teachers and highlighted the way that teachers are perceived by others and themselves and their importance in the shaping of experiences. In addition, these media representations and the social imaginary formation have material implications that extend beyond the classroom and affect the teachers in tangible ways. This thesis shined a light on the responsibility teachers take on, even more so in the time of the pandemic. In doing so, we can better see the vital work teachers do for the nation’s children and identify how society often fails to deliver them the necessary support.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Code Book

Social imaginary: References to the social imaginary will refer to one of the following three criteria:

Expectation: This code will be used for statements about the types of behaviors normally met by teachers in society. These would be normative beliefs that motivate these expectations and the way teachers interaction and fit within the society. Any statements about the what is an anticipated action taken by a teacher, what we as a society would expect, and the predicted actions taken by teachers.

Images, stories and legends: This code will be used for the way people imagine their social surroundings and how they are expressed in the myths and stories and past feelings and experiences told about teachers, memories of teachers actions. These would include descriptions of legendary teachers, or mythologies about teachers.

Personification: This code will be use for the way in which teachers see themselves in the social imaginary. When quotes from teachers arise, they will often interject their own thoughts on how they perceive themselves within the society and their own role in the society. Statements about how they imagine themselves, other teachers or how they should be, and the ways in which a fellow teacher should act.

Contradictions: This code will be used statements against the expectations of a teacher, such as “you send your child to school and you don’t expect ...”. It will be used for teachers acting in ways that are unfeeling or negative to their students. These would include statements and stories that indicated ways that teachers do not support or care for students, but instead behave in callous, unexpected, or violent ways, going against the commonly held beliefs of teachers in the social imaginary.

Social Imaginary coding guide

Expectations of teachers	Stories, myths, and legends	Personification	Contradictions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the behaviors “should” be • What is anticipated • Predictable actions of teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories of teachers • Past experiences with a teacher • “mythology” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quotes from teachers themselves • Stories told by teachers of their past experiences • Reference to how they imagine themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions against the expectations of the teacher • Negative acts by teachers against the norms and expectations

Emotional labor: References to emotional labor will refer to any one of the following three criteria:

Dedication: Code for references to teacher dedication to the job and to their devotion to students. This would be used for statements that refer to inspiring ways teachers motivate the students and act as mentors. Keywords for this code may include patient, encouraging, creative, innovative, adaptable, and persistent.

Caring: This code to be used for references to aspects of the teachers' work time used for caring and seeing to the emotional well-being of the students in their classroom. It also includes ways they have to show a caring demeanor whether or not they feel it. Keywords for this code may include being giving, caring, compassionate, supportive and kind.

Sacrifice: Code for references to sacrifices teachers make, often against their own health or financial situation. Stories and references to using their own funds for the classroom, health concerns that are ignored for the sake of the student, and acts of putting their own well-being aside for the job. This will be used for overworking, exhaustion, underpaid, and lack of appreciation.

Emotional Labor Coding Guide

Dedication	Caring	Sacrifice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated • Patient • Mentor • role model • Hero • Innovative • Resourceful • Encouraging • persistent • Devoted • Growth focused • Creative • Inspiring • Guidance • Innovative • Adaptable • Enthusiastic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing • Giving • kind • Supportive • Compassion • Generous • Social worker • Uplifting • friendly • another parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selfless • Hard working • Under valued • Burned out • Carrying societies' burden • Underpaid • Overworked • Exhausted • Disrespected • Essential • Tired • Underappreciated • Stressed • Over extended • Struggling • Irreplaceable • Supplementing financially • Brave • Tired • Striving • pivoting

Appendix 2: Story Titles and Dates

WRAL

March 2020

- 16: NC Teacher of Year offers insight to help teachers, educators during coronavirus situation
- 23: Remote learning prompts concerns for families, teachers
- 25: Michigan teachers stage parade for students during time away from school
- 28: Clayton elementary school reunited through afternoon parade
- 31: Wake schools distributing laptops to teachers for online instruction

April 2020

- 6: Cumberland County high school science teachers are helping Fayetteville police get some much-needed face masks to protect officers from the coronavirus.
- 8: It's time for N.C. to follow the lead of its classroom teachers
- 18: Rolesville Middle teacher dresses the part to teach students during history online class
- 27: "Just keep reading"--Gaston County teachers working to encourage kids through Facebook reading videos
- 27: This teacher played all 18 parts of a song for his students

May 2020

- 1: Parents give online learning during pandemic passing grades
- 4: Students get band back together to help lonely director during pandemic
- 5: Teachers encourage each other as state marks week to appreciate their efforts
- 20: Health screenings, smaller classes, alternate days are options as schools prepare for return amid pandemic
- 27: Teacher of the Week: Carstoba Byrdsong

June 2020

- 5: Teacher of the Week: Katelyn Lovette
- 9: Parents react to state's requirements for students to be able to return to school
- 11: Proposal gives NC teachers step increases, bonuses, but not raises
- 13: Wake County Schools create three stage plan for reopening schools
- 17: Parents, NAACP call for firing of a Pender County teacher who they say used a racial slur

July 2020

- 14: Teachers balk at plan to reopen schools in August
- 17: A teacher's perspective on virtual learning
- 18: 'Have a great summer': Students, teachers share fond memories of principal who died after fighting COVID-19
- 22: Wake educators express concern about upcoming year
- 28: Back-to-school during pandemic is a balancing act for teachers who are also parents

August 2020

- 3: More than ever, educators need parents, community and government support
- 8: A caravan of educators, parents and cafeteria workers protested in front of a 10: Online learning requires different strategies by both teachers and students
- Republican United States senator's office on Saturday afternoon.
- 13: Good and bad: Families speak up about their online learning experience with Wake County
- 26: Franklin County third-grade teacher finds creative way to teach to empty classroom

September 2020

- Wayne teacher, suffering from COVID, worries return to classroom isn't safe
- 7: Apex kindergarten teacher writes song for students about 2020 school year
- 10: NC school superintendent candidates sound off on teacher salaries, student achievement
- 25: Social media outrage over question on Broughton High quiz misses the full story
- 30: Teacher of the Week: Jeanne Beasley, Powatan Elementary School

October 2020

- 7: Teacher of the Week: Fredy Parra, Coats-Erwin Middle School
- 15: Former Wake County teacher says she resigned after COVID-19 requests not met
- 21: Teacher of the Week: Carol Foxx, Northern Granville Middle School
- 23: Wake schools will welcome 8,000 back to classrooms on Monday
- 26: Safety measures, smiles plentiful on first day back at Wake schools

November 2020

- 1: Teacher of the Week: Lisa Patterson
- 6: Wake schools gives teachers, staff confidential ways to report coronavirus worries
- 6: Reflecting on Raleigh native, founder of 'Mini Page,' who passed away at 9
- 9: Teacher diversity gap persists in NC
- 11: Teacher of the Week: Anna O'Brien, Fuquay-Varina Elementary

December 2020

- 1: An Impossible Choice: Teachers resign amid lack Of Covid protections
- 7: Being nimble, resilient and innovative in unique times
- 17: Community celebrates Franklinton teacher retiring after 21 years
- 18: Orange County educator gives back to students after his teacher inspired him
- 22: NCAE chief says teachers should move up in vaccination line

January 2021

- 5: Wake County School Board approves pay incentive for substitute teachers
- 12: Wake County teacher has double transplant and in critical condition
- 20: Wake County School leaders push for teachers to get corona virus vaccine
- 27: Teacher of the week Kelly Herman
- 28: Wake County teachers finding creative ways to connect to their students

February 2021

- 1: Teachers and students call on lawmakers for more funding for teachers and student supports
- 2: Wake County Schools will reopen for in-person learning
- 3: Teacher of the Week: Kate Hightower
- 3: Push to reopen schools pleases parents worries teachers
- 19: With teachers lower on NC vaccine priority list restarting in-person classes could be delayed

NBC

March 2020

- 15: Coronavirus Outbreak: NYC teachers furious over DeBlasio's policy
- 16: Coronavirus: See how one family and teacher are coping with home learning
- 16: Colorado teacher, students rebuild Japanese American prison camp piece by piece
- 19: 'There have been a lot of tears': Coronavirus threatens to shut schools until the fall
- 20: Teachers Union Leader: We're not going to risk kids' or teachers' lives

April 2020

- 10: With schools closed, many parents are now new teachers. As a homeschool mom, I can help
- 19: How to reach students without internet access during coronavirus? Schools get creative
- 23: College teacher accused of planning to burn cathedral dies by suicide after coronavirus jail release
- 29: New York City teacher dies from COVID-19 after she was denied tests, family says
- 30: Some districts are ending the school year early over challenges with distance learning

May 2020

- 2: Teacher who suffered traumatic brain injury alleges school fired him over disability
- 7: Connecticut teacher cares for student's baby brother as family recovers from coronavirus
- 13: Florida high school teacher charged with secretly recording students at pool party
- 15: South Carolina teacher on leave after Nazi accusation
- 6: Are teachers getting paid a fair salary?

June 2020

- 10: Parents and teachers conflicted over mixed messages on schools reopening
- 14: Family concerned for school teacher Gil Cunha who vanished from Connecticut home after experiencing COVID-19 symptoms
- 18: When coronavirus closed schools, some Detroit students went missing from class. These educators had to find them.
- 25: Reopening schools: Will in-person classes, online learning or a mix be the solution?
- 26: The future of the coronavirus recovery runs through the classroom

July 2020

- 14: The 'she-cession': Teachers, a majority-female workforce, grapple with what's next
- 14: 'I'm scared': In Detroit, a city hit hard by COVID-19, reopening classrooms sparks protests
- 24: CDC urges in-person learning, but offers little guidance for sick students or teachers
- 24: Florida lawyers offering free living wills to teachers returning to school during the pandemic
- 27: Some teachers leaving the classroom for good as Coronavirus concerns grow

August 2020

- 8: Florida teacher writes own obituary to protest reopening schools amid coronavirus pandemic
- 21: Teachers threaten to strike against in-person learning amid Coronavirus pandemic
- 24: Florida teachers opposed to returning to classroom win lawsuit with Gov. DeSantis
- 30: Teachers go above and beyond to welcome students back
- 30: Teachers across the world concerned as schools reopen despite rising cases

September 2020

- 9: A Day in the Life of a Teacher
- 17: Educators feel trapped between bad options as the school year begins
- 19: Nearly one-third of teachers have considered quitting due to stress, health concerns: Study
- 20: White House guidance sends teachers into class even after COVID-19 exposure
- 30: Texas teacher loses job for wearing 'Black Lives Matter' mask

October 2020

- 3: South Carolina mother and daughter teachers die from Covid-19 weeks apart
- 16: Native American teachers, entrepreneurs seek new ways to close digital divide
- 13: 'A mother to everyone': Elementary school teacher in North Carolina dies of Covid-19 complications
- 18: Educators teaching online and in person at the same time feel burned out
- 24: How one teacher's Black Lives Matter lesson divided one small town

November 2020

- 6: Boy, 9, suspended after teacher sees BB gun in his room during virtual class; family sues
- 17: Leslie Odom Jr. discusses importance of arts education in schools
- 18: Covid school closings raise privacy concerns for students and teachers
- 23: How grief training is helping educators manage pandemic-related trauma in schools
- 24: Married teachers in Georgia both get Covid-19, husband now on life support

December 2020

- 5: 'She was special and she cared': Loss of beloved art and music teacher leaves void
- 10: Why teachers are paid so little in the U.S.
- 16: Texas teacher goes above and beyond by conducting lessons from hospital bed
- 18: Virginia educator gives back to students after his teacher inspired him
- 21: Educators saved him during a tough childhood. Now he's Missouri's teacher of the year.

January 2021

- 15: Covid is having a devastating impact on children — and the vaccine won't fix everything
- 28: Teachers say they want Covid 19 vaccine as the head back to school
- 24: Chicago teachers vote to continue remote instruction
- 22: Two Georgia educators die of Covid on same day
- 2: Teacher turns garage into library For students learning from home

February 2021

- 1: Parents and Teachers Clash Over When To Resume In-Person Learning
- 5: Teachers demand Covid vaccinations before return to in-person instruction
- 12: To test or not to test? As schools remain closed, debate heats up over standardized testing
- 13: Teachers give thumbs new CDC roadmap reopening schools during pandemic
- 17: Kamala Harris talks teacher vaccinations schools opening safely

Appendix 3: Data Sample

April 27, 2020

Title: "Just keep reading"--Gaston County teachers working to encourage kids through Facebook reading videos

<https://www.wral.com/just-keep-reading-gaston-county-teachers-working-to-encourage-kids-through-facebook-reading-videos/19073487/>

"Just keep reading"--Gaston County teachers working to encourage kids through Facebook reading videos

Teacher: Many students dont have access to someone reading stories to them. We're giving them that access.

Reporter: Because the coronavirus has affected in person schooling in North Carolina many elementary school teachers in Gaston County are finding creative ways to engage with their students like reading children's books on Facebook.

Background voice reading: " I wish I could see you soon but until then I have a book to read"

Reporter: Kathy Provett is a kindergarten teacher at Gardner Park Elementary. She says her principal Jamie Wallace came up with the idea in order to make the transition to online schooling easier for students.

Principal: These children will have something to look forward to, and can see our faces and don't worry as much because being away from school, their stress... that happens to these kids. You may not realize it but not seeing their teacher, not having that routine, it's hard on them."

Reporter: Second grade teacher at Pinewood Elementary Hannah Adams says not being in school is just as hard for teachers as it is for students.

Teacher: My classroom is like my happy place. It's way more than just a school so it's been hard. Like I haven't seen my kids in a month. I have not been in my classroom doing my thing for a whole month.

Reporter: Adams decided to pose to reading videos on her personal Facebook page to remain connected with her current and former students and to give them a routine.

Teacher: Consistency is key with anything and everything and especially in those lower grades. Kindergarten, first, second grade... those are critical years Hearing someone reading is just as important as them picking up a book themselves.

Reporter: Although this transition has been hard for Adams, knowing that her videos are making a difference in at least one child's life makes it all worth it.

Teacher: That's kind of what I've had to remind myself of when I get like really down that one of my kids, former kids, a child anywhere is hearing an adult read and that's heartwarming to know that I'm reaching them somehow someway.

Reporter: It's not just teachers posting these videos. The Gaston Literacy Council has also gotten involved. Mary Dealy is a former 4th grade teacher and the co-coordinator of the literacy council's Reading Soul Mates Program which provides students reading below grade level with one-on-one attention. Because volunteers can't read with the students in person Dealy says Facebook videos are the next best thing.

Teacher: It's impornt for so many, for everyone, because of the body of life that it provides. So we're just trying to really engage the community and just expose children if possible to more literacy.

Background voice reading: thanks for reading Pete the cat. I love my white shoes..."

Teacher: They need to hear stories. They need to hear the literature. They need to hear how things are written. I think it's super important no matter where they are, what they're doing, that they continue to read every day. If even it's online or whether it's actual books in your hands or anything, just keep reading. It's important to keep reading even when you aren't in school.

Reporter: In Gaston County, I'm Caroline Boyer reporting.

