Article

Finding a Way: What Crisis Reveals about Teachers' Emotional Wellbeing and Its Importance for Education

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Abstract: In crisis, teachers are often positioned as frontline workers serving the community's needs. The emotional work of teaching is widely recognised, an acknowledgement that teachers mediate emotionally loaded relational dynamics. A fast-growing body of research investigates strategies and interventions to emotionally support children and young people in times of crisis. Less explored is teachers' emotional wellbeing during times of crisis. This research aims to better understand teachers' needs to support their wellbeing in times of crisis. It utilises a narrative approach, threading together thematically analysed Twitter posts from teachers and teacher representative bodies engaged in discussion of their profession across the USA. Our findings show that teachers experienced a range of emotions around the pandemic when their daily work pivoted to accommodate government-mandated responses. Teaching is, of its nature, an emotionally taxing role, and this is heightened in crisis. Our research highlights the importance of teachers finding a way toward self-care that is nested within an institutional culture of collective care.

1. Introduction

Our planet and its people are facing "crisis after crisis". On the immediate surface, there are climate change-related weather events, economic destabilisation, international conflict, and the COVID-19 pandemic (see [1]). On a deeper level, public narratives of sequential crises dominate public discourse and policy, stimulating emotional responses that influence how people relate to one another. Notably, these include many discussions about perceived crises in education.

Educational institutions are broadly implicated in such crises. They are often positioned in instrumental ways, such as keeping order, caring for students, and providing hope for the future. There is a fast-growing body of research exploring the need for strategies and interventions to support children and young people both during and after crisis (see [2]). In response to COVID-19, education providers have been political instruments in managing the virus outbreak, with teachers and institutions expected to work in support of federal and state public health strategies (see [3,4]). Less explored is teacher emotional work [5]. Emotional work can be defined as the effort teachers must make to comport themselves around a legitimate or permitted range of emotions. How the emotional toll of a rolling crisis might affect teachers' sense of agency in their work, influencing their capacity to support students, requires necessary attention (see [6–9]).

The evidence this article explores shows that teachers feel a sense of ubiquitous crisis around their work. This is a shared feeling, but not an explicit term of the profession's reflections on its practice. This ubiquitous but not explicit feeling delegates responsibility for teacher emotional wellbeing to the individual teachers themselves, rather than placing that responsibility at other levels (such as the jurisdiction that governs a given education

system, the employer's duty of care, or the peer care that characterises a community of practice). Given other literature around the importance of emotional wellbeing for enabling education and educational success, the feeling of crisis is itself a major challenge for education and providers of education.

This article opens with a discussion of the 'rolling crisis', exploring how this widely shared affective formulation informs the expectations of teachers. It then reviews the theory and literature around the emotional dimensions of teaching work and teacher identities, paying particular attention to Hochschild's [10] argument that emotional rules govern professional work. The debates about the emotion and affect theory are vast and varying; for the purposes of this paper it is important to note that, while emotion is experienced on an individual level—physically, biologically, neurologically, and behaviourally—it is also experienced within cultural, structural, and situational contexts. We use the term 'emotion' or 'emotionality' as an all-encompassing term that includes the multiple dimensions of emotion framed through a psychosocial (psychoanalytic and sociological) lens; for example, we draw on Turner [11], Freud [12], Winnicott [13,14], and Hochschild [10]. This concept of emotionality overarches frameworks such as emotional intelligence, competence, regulation, and resilience, which are distinct bodies of work that intersect in various ways. Teacher responses to emotional rules are accountable through the stories teachers tell—are permitted to tell—about their work and their professional identities, so this article explains a methodology for reading social media posts (tweets) that enables an exploration of these stories. The stories were initially categorised in two ways: (1) as Sacred Stories telling what is expected of teachers; and (2) as Cover Stories detailing what teachers report they do, think, and feel, usually aligned with expectations. Guided by the Sacred Stories and Cover Stories that teachers tell, this article's findings identify a category of Uncover Stories—what teachers do, think, and feel—which present clear evidence of emotionally overloaded tensions that teachers are responsible for managing.

2. The Rolling Crisis and Expectations of Teachers

On 30 January 2020, responding to widespread outbreaks of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the World Health Organization [15] declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Shortly after this, there were warnings of the detrimental impacts that such an emergency might entail, for example, food and resource shortages, which would influence people's livelihoods and vital infrastructure such as health and education systems [16]. The pandemic's educational impacts became very apparent over the next three months.

Schatzki [17] (p. 18) defines crises as occurring in people's 'ongoing moment-to-moment lives'. They distinguish large-scale crises, such as political, economic, and international crises that manifest as recessions, conflict, supply chain breakdowns, climate change, and pandemics, from the more localised crises in ongoing life. It is a distinction that we refer to as macro- and micro-crises in this paper. Micro-crises are attached to the people who experience them and demand a response, whether that be an action, thought, or emotion. Macro- and micro-crises interact. For example, a teacher might face a micro-crisis where his/her internet crashes and the online marking he/she is working on is lost. Such an event is a crisis because, as Schatzki [17] (p. 19) states, it is 'unexpected, unpredictable and undesired', but the event is localised to the teacher experiencing the crisis. On the other hand, a teacher may experience a loss of data due to failing infrastructure—loss of electricity or broader internet connectivity—brought about by a COVID-19-related human resourcing crisis.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims to ensure 'inclusive, equitable and quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all'. UNICEF [18] reports this that Goal 4 has been significantly compromised due to COVID-19 public health responses across the globe. The framework for action that underpins Goal 4 is the UNESCO [19] (p. 30) Incheon declaration, which expects that teachers will be 'well-qualified, trained, adequately remunerated and motivated, using appropriate ped-

agogical approaches'. There is also an expectation that teachers should be supported by 'appropriate information and communication technology (ICT), as well as the creation of safe, healthy, gender-responsive, inclusive and adequately resourced environments that facilitate learning'. So, while teachers are thought to be the most significant influencers in regard to equity, access, and quality education, there is recognition that the broader environment has the capacity to support or constrain teachers in their work. Cannon, Davis, and Long [20] remark that teachers are often positioned in the frontline of recovery from crises, which has implications for education practices and requires adequate planning to avoid further potential damage. For instance, Willse [21] describes the 'scramble to adopt technologies for emergency remote teaching' amid nationwide school closures in the United States of America (USA).

While the aim of 'quality teaching' has currency, it is impeded by a 'scramble' to meet demand that may limit agency. For instance, Pinto [22] explores how policy layers create disjunctures between what is mandated and the realities of the workplace for school leaders in Canada. Similarly, Willse [21] analysed 337 publicly available documents in the USA from 50 state education agencies, finding far-ranging recommendations for emergency remote teaching in response to COVID-19 that left many teachers feeling overworked and under resourced. Even before the pandemic, in the USA, Bartell et al. [23] (p. 304) flagged 'the recent flux of viral teacher resignation letters [that] are acts of teacher agency, speaking against neoliberal practices and policies that constrain the work of teaching to the detriment of students and teachers'. In Australia, Acton and Glasgow [24] review teacher wellbeing, where wellbeing is seen as being under threat in a political environment of performativity and competitiveness. Each article highlights the tensions inherent in what is expected of teachers. For instance, UNESCO [19] anticipates safe and inclusive environments. According to Willse [21], these are under threat due to the exposed inequities in the educational system in the USA, particularly with regard to technology. Moreover, UNESCO [19] supposes that teachers are well-qualified and renumerated, but Pinto [22] notes that de-skilling teacher professionals and cost cutting measures are required for school leaders to be deemed as 'performing'.

In such an environment, teachers' agency becomes compromised [23]. As Biesta, Priestley, and Robinson [25] suggest, agency requires consciousness of the motivations, values, and beliefs that lead to action. Both Bartell et al. [23] and Biesta, Priestley, and Robinson [25] indicate that, in recent years, teacher autonomy has been reduced by tight political and administrative controls, responding to imperatives other than crisis management. Building on such work, Hopman [26,27] shows a connection between teacher agency—a capacity to consciously act in practice—and emotional consciousness. Much of a person's emotional life is carefully mediated by unspoken and often unknown emotional rules, and becoming conscious of how emotional rules might influence action enhances agency. Since a crisis demands action in often swift and unknown ways, as well as intense and impulsive emotional responses, agency may be limited.

3. Emotionality and Teaching Performance

Thompson and Jones [28] (p. 91) discuss how 'teachers trade in their empathy, creativity, professionalism and innovation for scripted curriculum...'. Teachers are constantly striving to be 'good enough' but typically fall short due to the expectations outlined in the previous section. Their article recounts the emotional experience of a teacher fighting against 'the pit deep in my stomach filling with frustration, disgust and sadness' at the expectation to measure and compare student progress in a way that dehumanises both teachers and students. The authors highlight how teachers often have to ignore feeling—and, thus, having empathy—for and with their students. While Thompson and Jones [28] recount specific 'trauma', Acton and Glasgow [24] consider the literature on teacher wellbeing and seek to determine what enables teacher flourishing—as distinct from how to survive the traumas. They are more explicit in the consideration of the range of individual, relational and contextual factors that might influence emotionality. For example, individual

factors such as emotional intelligence influence teacher wellbeing. On a relational level, emotionality is hinted at by the authors, highlighting the importance of teachers feeling 'connected' and maintaining a sense of 'belonging'. Contextually, it is noted that external factors influence how teachers manage emotions. In contrast to Thompson and Jones [28], Acton and Glasgow [24] (p. 102) note that teacher wellbeing is constructed collaboratively, resulting in a sense of 'personal professional fulfilment, satisfaction, purposefulness and happiness'. Wellbeing is supported or constrained 'by contextual factors which enable teachers to realise their purpose and goals in teaching, provide realistic and manageable work demands that allow for autonomy, and which value, respect and celebrate teachers' professional expertise and work practice' [24] (p. 102).

Since Acton and Glasgow's [24] review of the literature, teacher wellbeing and emotionality has been in greater focus. Factoring in studies from 1985 to 2019, Chen [29] developed a Teacher Emotion Model, which considers the ever-changing relationship between various elements of emotionality. Chen [29] terms this an integrated perspective and considers four seminal systematic reviews, beginning with Sutton and Wheatley's [30], followed by Fried, Mansfield, and Dobozy's [31]; Uitto, Jokikokko, and Estola's [32]; and Šarić's [33] reviews.

Building on the earlier work, Chen's [29] model attempts to define teacher emotion as unique from general emotion and posits 'antecedents', 'teacher emotions', and 'consequences' as three interrelated aspects of the model. The antecedents of teacher emotions include personal knowledge, values, and skills; personality; and professional beliefs and contextual antecedents such as sociocultural, policy, organisational, and stakeholder factors. Furthermore, a teacher's 'emotional capacity' for emotional labour strategies, emotional intelligence, and emotion regulation are the antecedents of an emotional experience but also form the nature of teacher emotion. The model also outlines how teachers themselves, along with their students and even pedagogical practice, bear the consequences of teachers' emotions. Chen [29] sets out to offer a fine-grained perspective of the interrelationship of the nature of teacher emotion and its antecedents and consequences. However, the granularity of the model does not necessarily make teacher emotion clearer. Chen also argues that a definition of 'teacher emotion' is yet to be clarified, whilst also detailing how the nature of emotion is dependent on such a wide range of factors. Some of these are yet to be named, so it is hardly surprising that a consensus definition for 'teacher emotion' is yet to be agreed. The nature of teacher emotion is mediated by teacher emotional rules, which are discussed further in the subsequent section and are derived from the notion of emotional labour (see [2,34]). Teacher emotional rules are born from a collective and, in turn, give rise to the collective; hence, the definition of teacher emotion is dependent on and unique to the collective from which it originates. Chen [29], like Frenzel, Daniels, and Burić [5]; Šarić [33]; and Turner [11], notes the slipperiness in trying to define and research emotion.

Further studies have emerged since Chen's [29] systematic review (see [4–6,8,9,35–37]). Such studies hark from Australia, Chile, Croatia, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the USA, demonstrating similar concerns internationally. Some studies specifically feature higher-education teachers (see [6,8]), while most consider primary or secondary teachers (teachers of students ranging in age from four to eighteen years of age). Some studies specifically consider teacher emotion related to COVID-19 responses and the shift to online teaching (see [4,6,8,9,20]).

Soncini, Politi, and Matteucci [9] employed a mixed-methods approach to explore the implications of the COVID-19 lockdown and online teaching on emotional exhaustion among primary and secondary teachers in Italy. The findings were mostly in alignment with an earlier study based in the United Kingdom by Kim and Asbury [4] where twenty-four primary or secondary teachers were interviewed, sharing 'key scenes' from the first five to six weeks of lockdown. Kim and Asbury's [4] research considered stressors and coping strategies. It did not set out to investigate emotional themes; however, themes of emotion emerged. They describe worry for vulnerable students surfacing, as well as dealing with

uncertainty—where teachers described feeling 'panic', like the 'rug had been pulled from under you'. Furthermore, teachers noted the sadness and distress of ended or disrupted relationships with students where trust and investment in each other is necessary. Soncini, Politi, and Matteucci's [9] research led to two distinctions, where teachers expressed concern over increased workload, as well as fear of contracting COVID-19. The distinction could be due to focussing on 'worries, fears and concerns' experienced by the teachers, as Soncini, Politi, and Matteucci state (p. 499), but it possibly also has something to do with the political environment in which the teachers are located. Similarly, Karousiou, Hajisoteriou, and Panayiotis [37] articulate how intercultural education policy enactment depends on how teachers feel about the agenda. Tensions between the two can lead to teachers becoming 'creative mediators' of the policy agenda when they find themselves constricted.

Kim and Asbury [4] flag earlier research indicating that workload and behaviour management are typical stressors for teachers, while their research indicates that, during the pandemic, uncertainty and concern for students were major stressors. Similarly, pre-pandemic, Hopman's [27] research also indicated that, while workload was a concern of teachers, the more significant stressor was navigating relationships with students, parents, and peers. Uncertainty surfaced in Hopman's [27] research as well, but, of course, not in reference to the pandemic; rather, it was the uncertainty over whether a teacher has made the 'right' call and being uncertain about what action to take. Emotional conflict due to uncertainty appears to also be tied up with agency in Kim and Asbury's [4] work, where teachers who can 'find a way forward'—that is, to take action—find that stress, or what we might call emotional conflict, is reduced. However, Kim and Asbury also noted [4] (p. 1075) that 'some [teachers], particularly those in senior leadership positions, remained stressed about a lack of clarity around the government's short-to-medium-term plans'. A lack of clarity from the government during the COVID-19 response was also cited as an issue in Willse's [21] study. Similar findings explicitly reporting on the emotional toll of the COVID-19 response on teachers are presented by Auger and Formentin's [6]; and Cannon, Davis, and Long's [20] studies. It is also reflected by Burstein [38], reporting on a survey of 5000 American teachers who frequently felt anxious, fearful, worried, overwhelmed, and sad. Auger and Formentin's [6] findings emphasised teachers grappling with a discrepancy between the action they felt was needed and a different sense of what was expected. Finding a way forward is most desirable for our teachers and education systems; however, what happens when the action deemed necessary to move forward is constrained?

4. Teacher Emotional Rules

Emotion and cognition are inseparable [11]. Thinking exists within a context of emotion, and emotion exists within a context of thinking. It is the interaction between the individual and the social experience of emotion where Hochschild's [10] notion of emotional rules was born. Hochschild's theory indicates that emotional rules are socially created. When an individual experiences emotion in any given situation, it is filtered through such rules, determining whether emotion is felt, displayed, hidden, or faked. Hochschild's theory has been applied in a school teaching context where Hopman [26,27] outlined a set of teacher emotional rules apparent in the lived experience of a small group of teachers. For instance, one of the most pervasive rules that is evident in teachers' stories of their practice is that the feeling of defeat is inherent in teaching but must not be shown. So, the emotional rule compels teachers to hide their fatigue in the never-ending struggle that is teaching. Such impulse is an example of emotional work in teaching. Energy goes into playing by the rules.

Emotional rules are a necessary element of healthy human functioning. The earlier work of Winnicott [13,14] and Freud [12] informed Hochschild [10] where Winnicott's notion of the true self (who we might be without inhibition) and the false self (who we are expected to be) are in constant negotiation with one another. For example, a teacher who has lived in an environment where expression is freely accepted, heard, and valued may feel and display defeat in the workplace by stating, through tears, 'I have had enough'. The

responses that the teacher receives from such an expression will determine whether that teacher is likely to express defeat similarly again or not. Our sense of reality constantly evolves as we make our way through our world [27].

5. Context and Methods

5.1. Narrative

A narrative approach was utilised to conduct the research for this article, where Clandinin and Connelly [39], Bruner [40], and Clandinin [41] describe narratives as dynamic and cyclic. Stories are nested within stories—each with a past, present, and future—depending on how the story is told, retold, and received. Furthermore, narratives shift depending on who tells them or who receives them. Crites [42] proposes a framework of Sacred Stories, Cover Stories, and Secret Stories, which depict the transformative potential of all testimony. Within this framework, the Sacred Story entails a dominant narrative—what story do we as a collective tell about crises, the emotion involved, and the ways in which teachers should act in such times? Such documentation as policies, media stories, and universally accepted expectations of schools and teachers inform such a narrative. Hopman [26,27] distils the normative Sacred Story for teaching as follows:

> 'As a teacher I should love teaching. I must remain calm—neutral—at all times. Most importantly, anger and fear should not be displayed though discontentment may be expressed as frustration, sadness and worry, though these expressions should be limited as to not deviate into disloyalty toward my school or organisation. I do not feel discontented with students or parents because being in a classroom brings me happiness at all times. I do feel sadness at times, but this is when I see student suffering.'

> 'Expressions of love towards students should be minimised, though I should be completely self-sacrificing for my students. Their emotions are more important than mine and their education is more important than my wellbeing. Of course, all of this would require me to be a robot, which I am not, so I will ultimately feel defeated, but I might never be aware of the degree in which I feel defeat, so I will never show it and keep keeping on.'

By contrast, Secret Stories are those personal narratives of teachers that will either conflict with, coincide with, or diverge from the Sacred Story. Also in tension are the Cover Stories—the stories that teachers share to construct or project a professional persona. Twitter posts such as the ones that we explore in this article are expressions of the Cover Stories that teachers choose to expose to the social media world. Our findings add to this framework a fourth dimension, which we call Uncover Stories. These narratives reveal what other institutional and professional pressures work to conceal—which teachers experience as *truths that must be out* about teaching. The next section sets out our research approach in detail.

5.2. Methodology

The data represented in this article stem from nine individual authors of Twitter posts in the USA, without full knowledge of where each author is precisely located. There are, no doubt, circumstances and pandemic responses unique to each location, since the USA is a large nation with many states. The data reported here represent the experience of nine teachers; these data cannot represent all teachers' experiences. Furthermore, the tweets are public expressions and cannot be assumed to be equal to private expressions. These tweets are only part of the story.

Notwithstanding those caveats, our narrative explorations are suitable because they are expressly aligned with the theory of emotional rules. Cover Stories are typically told to align with the relevant Sacred Stories, meaning that emotional expressions are filtered through rules of display or feeling to uphold societal expectations of what should or should not be expressed. Frenzel, Daniels, and Burić [5] (p. 258) note a heavy reliance on

self-reporting assessments of emotion and the potential for such reports to be influenced by 'stereotypically taboo emotions' and self-deception. Frenzel, Daniels, and Burić [5] recommend utilising other data, such as physiological responses, like heart rates or facial expressions. This study did not rely on such physiological responses but rather captured teachers' emotional expressions in situ through Twitter posts. The teachers were not prompted to respond; rather, they responded to their world because they wished to.

Alongside the narrative approach sits a multi-case study proposed by Stake [43]. Stake highlights the importance of examining the 'case' as a system of experiences that inform the consequent 'functioning' and 'activities'. The cases that we intend to explore—the experience of individual teachers, the experiences of educational organisations, and Sacred and Cover Stories—are embedded within an educational, political, cultural, and historical context which influences each case and how the cases live together.

Figure 1 gives a visual impression of the multi-case approach wherein each case appears separate, and yet they are interconnected—Sacred and Cover Stories are clustered and individual teachers and educational organisations are interdependent. Thus, even though T4 to T9 appear as Cover Stories, some of their expressions are expressed as the Sacred Story. For example, some of the individual teachers' expressions come from a place of 'this is what I should say' (Cover Story), whereas other expressions are 'this is what I really say, think and feel', which may well align with the Sacred Story. In this study, the differentiation between the two cannot be determined, but we can determine whether the expressions align with the Sacred Story—if they do not, they fall into an alternate Cover Story category, 'this is what I will say'. A multi-case approach recognises that the researchers produce a 'portrayal of the case', which, in itself, is dynamic. Hence, such a multi-case approach can benefit from lines of narrative inquiry.

Figure 1. Multi-case methodology (T# indicates a Twitter account).

Our study's narrative approach draws on the work of Clandinin and Connelly [39], who describe the process of inquiring into 'field texts' to determine 'resonant threads'. In this case, the 'field texts' are a selection of Twitter posts collected between March and September 2020 (inclusive). Twitter has been rebranded as X; however, the data were collected from the 'Twitterverse' and are therefore referred to as tweets in this paper. The tweets were selected against three other criteria: (1) location, (2) belonging to that of a teacher or an educational organisation, and (3) related to the COVID-19 crisis. We specifically sought tweets from the USA. The locations of the tweets were determined by the authors either providing their location in their profile or by the authors situating themselves in relation to political events, weather events (for example, a specific hurricane),

road trip destinations (for example, Yellowstone National Park), national holidays (for example, Thanksgiving), or an affiliated school.

We sought tweets from two categories of authors: (1) individual teacher accounts and (2) organisational accounts representing bodies within the teaching profession. Individual teacher accounts were determined by the author referring to himself/herself as a teacher, or if 'teacher' was in his/her Twitter handle. There was no differentiation between elementary-, middle-, and high-school teachers, nor college and higher-education teachers—although, college and university teachers are typically known as 'professors' in the USA. The individual teacher accounts were also confirmed by the Twitter posts referring to general teaching practice with groups of students, or teaching in classrooms or elementary, middle, or high schools. Six individual teacher Twitter accounts were selected as field texts, all meeting the above criteria.

Three organisational Twitter accounts with national reach across the USA were selected as field texts: the Department of Education (DoE), the National Education Association (NEA), and PBS Teachers. While the Department of Education (DoE) provides a framework of governance, the NEA offers union representation of the teaching workforce, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) claims to be America's largest classroom [44], and PBS Teachers provides instructional resources and innovations for classrooms, as well as a 'Teachers Lounge'. PBS Teachers promotes 'fresh ideas and inspiration from educators', therefore acting as an arbiter of what ideas are 'fresh' and 'inspirational'.

Once the Twitter accounts were identified, specific Twitter posts within the allocated timeframe related to the COVID-19 crisis were collected. A COVID-19 crisis-related tweet should refer to education, learning, teaching, curriculum, school, classroom, students, or teachers and one or more of the following (or any synonyms): COVID, the pandemic, quarantine, remote learning, technology, health and wellbeing. Emotion is a complex phenomenon that can only be understood in terms of its parts within the whole, and so a process of teasing out the parts and pulling them back together through narrative is essential. Specific emotion was not sought. The purpose of reflexive thematic analysis is to critically analyse the perceived meaning; in this case, the researchers critiques their own understanding of emotional fragments and expressions and consequent interpretation.

The 'resonant threads' emerge through a reflexive thematic analysis, which was proposed by Braun and Clark [45] and further modelled by Byrne [46]. Reflexive thematic analysis recognises the researcher's active role in knowledge production and takes a more inductive approach to analysis, where the resonant themes emerge rather than being sought. Such a form of analysis pairs well with a narrative approach in that the resonant threads of a narrative also emerge, and, likewise, the researcher is recognised as an active part of the narrative construction. Our approach differs somewhat from a typical narrative inquiry approach, in which the narrative remains intact and is holistically considered. We used NVivo software [47] to code and draw out the elements of emotion that we seek to understand.

The study gained ethics approval from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee. Deep consideration was given to the process of consent. Twitter [48] recognises the value of its content to support research endeavours; however, in alignment with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research [49], publicly available digital content cannot be assumed researchable without regard for the author, especially when it is the opinion or representation of an individual. The authors of individual accounts were alerted to the research study and alerted that their tweets were deidentified and paraphrased so that if they were fed into a search engine (Google) or a Twitter search, the Tweet would not be attributed to an account holder. Anonymous individual Twitter accounts were named @Twitter1, @Twitter2, and so on.

In total, 248 Twitter posts were selected and imported to NVivo. The first-round coding considered emotional expressions as they presented themselves. For instance, the following tweet was initially coded as 'tired' and 'worry'.

'I am tired of wearing masks. I am tired of not being able to go on field trips. I am tired of worrying that someone has COVID. I am just tired.' @Twitter1 October 2020.

There are many more emotions than English words to describe them considering that everyone feels and expresses emotion uniquely in a given moment [11]. What feels and looks like anger for one person is experienced differently by another—we all emote in different ways. Yet some emotion words are only subtly different from one another, and if you were to interchange them in a sentence, the ideational value would not necessarily change. If the word 'tired' is replaced with 'overwhelmed' or 'in defeat', its referent meaning remains essentially consistent. The author is conveying a struggle that he/she feels that he/she is losing or can no longer battle against. 'Defeat' is a strange word for an emotion, as discussed more thoroughly in Hopman [26,27]. It captures a shifting struggle whose onset involves a challenge that might threaten defeat, but which might also spur one on to meet the challenge. Deeper into the challenge, one might experience a feeling of just managing the struggle or, even deeper still, a feeling that the balance has tipped into feeling defeated. The above quote is located somewhere on the 'feeling defeated' end of the struggle. Note that such emotional expressions can be categorised as explicit or implicit. For example, 'tired' and 'worry' are explicit expressions of emotion, while there is also an implied expression of 'scepticism'—a feeling that, despite wearing masks, there is doubt about how effective they can really be in a classroom because 'I am tired of worrying that someone has COVID'.

The second-round coding allowed for synonymous emotion words or phrases to be clustered together and to determine the catalyst for the emotional expression. The range of emotions and how often they were referenced (in parentheses) are as follows: frustration (55), defeat (45), scepticism (41), worry (39), sadness (27), hope (14), anger (11), fear (11), courage (11), confusion (10), happiness (8), humour (7), contentment (6), and love (4). The above quote and the majority of the individual teacher Twitter posts were general in nature and related to the disruption of teaching practices caused by the COVID-19 crisis, for example, changing policy, physical spaces, curriculum, schedules, and class lists. Across both the individual teacher and organisational Twitter posts, other significant catalysts were professional learning needs (82 references); and issues related to student support, such as grappling with how to support anxious or scared students (53 references) and dealing with issues of equity or inequity (20 references).

Despite seeking synonymous emotional language, it is worth noting that a distinction was sometimes significant. For example, while hope and courage are clearly related, we coded them under separate categories. Mentions of hope are usually in reference to the external world, i.e., hope in others or fate, whereas courage is framed as an aspiration for the internal world—hope in oneself, such as 'I hope I can manage this'.

Earlier work has explored emotion in classrooms by comparing and contrasting the Sacred Story with Cover and Secret Stories in Melbourne, Australia (see [26,27]). There were some notable differences between the two contexts, both before and after the pandemic's onset. In this earlier work, defeat and contentment were the most referenced emotions, and there was a conspicuous sense of balance between the two. Most mentions of defeat also conveyed an element of contentment, indicating a more manageable struggle through which defeat might pose a threat but the teacher can still find satisfaction in his/her work. Another difference is the recent addition and high incidence of scepticism. Also, hope, courage, confusion, and humour are additions to the current research. A third round of coding allowed for the previously coded emotional expressions to be recoded as either being in alignment or conflict with the teacher emotional rules established in the earlier work. The following sections discuss the findings.

6. Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion are merged to address narrative fragmentation. As noted earlier, narratives are nested based on Clandinin's [41] work. There is a story lived, a story

told, a story heard, a story retold, a story relived—and perhaps others. When narratives are analysed, particularly through a thematic analysis, they are often fragmented, and the 'whole' is diminished. This article forms part of a larger narrative. It is a version of a story retold. Since the Twitter posts are fragments of a whole, the importance of reinforcing the complex interplay between fragments of emotion and narrative is significant to this text. To avoid further fragmentation and maintain a sense of a whole, the findings and discussion are merged.

6.1. Sacred Stories

The current data collected through Twitter posts mostly reinforce the earlier Sacred Story, and the similarities and differences are now discussed. The DoE, NEA, and PBS Teachers' Twitter feeds were analysed during the data collection period, which narrates the story of teaching as a profession in the USA. From the three organisation Twitter accounts, 117 posts were analysed. Out of the 117 posts, 47 contained references to emotion; they were mostly implicit references, but some were explicit. Implicit references to emotion were taken as, for example, 'Teaching during a pandemic is challenging! How are you coping?' which indicates an implicit sense of threatening defeat.

It is recognised that a teacher's 'job has never been easy' (DoE) and is framed by 'challenges', 'setbacks', and 'victory'. Tweets mentioned that teachers would undoubtedly find 'coping' difficult amidst such struggle and being 'overworked', but they did not attribute an explicit emotion to the experience. Non-specific emotion was explicitly discussed in other instances. For example, it was referenced in general terms when teachers were asked, 'how do you feel about being away from your students?' Discussion of 'resources to support your mental health' was a similarly general trope.

Some specific emotions were mentioned in reference to teaching and teachers. One such emotion, 'care', was mentioned in a Tweet with the phrasing 'Self-Care Saturday' querying how teachers might be taking care of themselves on the weekend. Grief and stress were also explicitly noted as likely emotions that teachers might be feeling. These three emotions were referenced only once each in two separate tweets out of the 47 tweets referencing emotion. There is a tone throughout the tweets that teachers likely feel emotions in general and that teachers are met by challenges which put them in a position of needing care, though the specificity and explicitness of such a message is lacking compared to other messaging related to emotion. For instance, the remainder of the posts were either expressing the emotion of the organisation or noting emotional states students might find themselves in.

On an organisational level, the NEA announces being proud of itself for 'demanding that basic health and safety standards are met', also intimating the courage required for teachers to keep toiling. They also express hope for the future balanced with scepticism of governments to make sound decisions. The Department of Education expressed emotion through three love heart emojis in three separate posts expressing thanks to teachers and stating, 'we are in this together'. So, the message that the organisational tweets send is that students obviously have feelings about the current state of affairs—notably the COVID-19 pandemic—and the organisations themselves also possess feelings about the situation.

Out of the 47 references related to emotion, 14 were focussed on the emotional wellbeing or state of students rather than teachers. In these posts, explicit emotion was mostly named, for instance, 'scared', 'anxious' 'afraid' 'confused, grumpy, happy', 'hope', 'excited', and 'comfortable'. All 14 references were pitched to teachers, asking how they might support students to manage or foster such emotions. The following quotes are an example.

When talking to our youngest learners, who may be scared or anxious about coronavirus, remember that having hard conversations should be E.A.S.Y.:

'Eye level'

'Age-appropriate language'

'Soft voice'

'Yield to allow children to share thoughts or ask questions.' (PBS Teachers, March 2020)

'Confused, grumpy or happy? Every feeling is okay! Now is a stressful time for many—let your little ones know that it's okay to experience emotions.' (PBS Teachers, May 2020)

The analysis of the tweets from the three organisations is mostly in alignment with the Sacred Story in earlier work, as discussed above: contentment and happiness should reward teaching. Teachers should love their work. This story is reinforced positively by such statements as 'we want to be back with our students' (NEA). It is reinforced negatively by assumptions that teachers experience grief when they cannot work in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers' emotional neutrality is reinforced by a lack of recognition that teachers might actually feel things—only two out of the 117 organisational tweets we analysed make an explicit reference to teachers possessing feelings. The two tweets are featured below.

'This new school year has brought new challenges and opportunities for all of us to overcome and adapt. It's also come with a lot of different emotions. No matter what you are feeling right now—you are not alone. This #BackToSchool season, we are all in this together.' ♡ (DoE, September 2020)

'Today at 7 p.m. ET: Join us for a webinar on grief and self-care during. Psychologist Thomas Demaria will suggest strategies to facilitate mourning as well as promote self-care, wellness, and resiliency.' (NEA, October 2020)

We have also noted a muting of the limited emotion that gets expressed. The NEA conveyed the most emotional content out of the three organisations we observed, but even it observed the emotional rule that anger and fear should not be displayed (Sacred Story). While there are undertones of anger—though not enough to confirm as an emotional expression—fear is mentioned only once, i.e., in reference to how students might be feeling (PBS quotes above).

6.1.1. Frustration, Worry, Sadness, and Anger Are Evoked by Student Interactions

As stated earlier, the Sacred Story limits expressions of anger, although grief and sadness are acknowledged in the tweets. Worry is also expressed but more implicitly; for example, 'basic health and safety standards [need to be] met to ensure a safe return to in-person instruction for students, educators, and their families'. The major difference is that, while these emotions are acknowledged in the current Sacred Story, they are not necessarily evoked by student interactions. Yes, teachers are expected to feel sadness over not being able to interact with their students, but, for the most part, the emotional response is evoked by disagreement between the organisations that underpin the Sacred Story—in particular, those with administrative and political power. An addition to the Sacred Story of teachers in crisis is that discontentment—a combination of frustration, worry, sadness, and anger—may be expressed toward political and administrative leaders. Furthermore, sadness is not just evoked by witnessing student suffering but also from being separated from students.

6.1.2. Hope and Courage

Hope and courage were collectively referenced 25 times. Interestingly, only 4 of the references of hope or courage are from individual teacher tweets, and the other 21 are from the organisational Twitter posts singing the praises of courageous teachers—mostly from the NEA—or expressing a hopeful future with more funding and a range of initiatives—mostly from the DoE. The following quotes exemplify a message of hope from the organisational accounts. The DoE September tweet above is also an example. While the PBS quote is explicit in its reference to hope, the DoE and the NEA quotes imply hope through language, such as 'a great set of resources to start with' or 'adapt and overcome'. The quotes signal a way forward.

'Do you sometimes find yourself at a loss for words when explaining COVID-19 to your kids or students? Wisdom from Mister Rogers—"Look for the helpers"—is giving many of us hope right now.' (PBS, May 2020)

'If you need some help figuring out how to support students who may be experiencing trauma or unmet basic needs due to the pandemic, this is a great set of resources to start with. Social-Emotional Learning During COVID-19.' (NEA, September 2020)

Another addition to the Sacred Story of teachers in crisis, distinct from the earlier work, is a heightened emphasis on dampening emotions that might prevent the conjuring of hope or courage to ensure that teachers can pivot in crisis, upskill, and continue teaching without misstep.

6.1.3. The Teacher Emotion Narrative in Relation to the Macro Crisis

The Sacred Story that can be derived from an analysis of the emotional rules is also the narrative of the macro-crisis—the broader implications of the pandemic within the USA's system of education. This narrative is scripted by the most powerful voices in the system; it reflects both intentions and expectations. Largely, the Sacred Story permeating the USA throughout the COVID-19 pandemic was congruent with the Sacred Story observed in the (pre-pandemic) earlier work, but with two exceptions: (1) frustration, worry, sadness, and anger are often evoked by the disagreement between governing bodies and the pandemic itself; and (2) hope and courage must be mustered. While the intention and expectation of the Sacred Story is clear, a further complication is that the reality of enacting the Sacred Story is undermined when such powerful voices remain silent or do not facilitate action, much as Willse [21] suggests. Hence, teacher agency is compromised, along with the ability to conjure up hope and courage.

6.2. Cover Stories

Cover Stories are the stories that are shared openly and usually serve to publicise personal alignment with the Sacred Story. In the earlier work, the Cover Stories did align with the Sacred Story; however, in the current study, there are notable differences between the Sacred and the Cover Stories. The following rules feature a shift when teachers are faced with a crisis.

Frustration, worry, sadness, and anger are evoked by student interactions.

'I was sad to learn our district will not be returning for the year. I did not know that saying goodbye at break would be saying goodbye for the year. I miss their questions, their light bulb moments, our jokes, and more. This is just sad.' (@Twitter2, April 2020)

'Day one virtual training. I spent 15 min getting the one not at all tech savvy teacher up to speed at the expense of all the other teachers who are trying to learn the next thing. Isn't this exactly what the classroom is like? Too much time spent on that one student?' (@Twitter3, August 2020)

The data demonstrate that there were 12 references where the above rule was honoured, for example, the two tweets above, where Twitter2 expressed explicit sadness and Twitter3 implied frustration, both in relation to working with students. However, there were 78 references in conflict with the rule where frustration, worry, sadness, and anger were evoked by people or things other than students. The above Twitter3 quote is an example of also being in conflict with the rule because the teachers being trained were, in this instance, the main source of frustration.

Out of the 78 tweets in conflict with this rule, 49 contained an element of frustration, 23 contained an element of worry, 15 contained an element of sadness, and 6 contained an element of anger. These statistics are mostly in alignment with previous research, where frustration was the most typical emotion expressed, followed by worry. A difference is that sadness and, to a lesser degree, anger were expressed more openly, whereas, in previous

research, these emotions were typically hidden, especially from students and families, which, in this case, are the public. The data show that sadness and anger are more readily expressed.

> 'Social distanced meetings, masks, and temperature checks. Looking forward to it!!!! (#sarcasm)' (@Twitter4, July 2020)

> 'To parents, If I provide before or after school support, don't moan at me for "not fitting your child's schedule". Your child not attending remote classes or doing their work doesn't fit my life—I'm not moaning to you...' (@Twitter2, September 2020)

These quotes show an expression of implied anger. Stating 'I am angry' or 'I am mad' is rare, unlike the earlier quote, which states, 'This is just sad'. So, explicitly discussing anger is still unlikely, but it was expressed by affectation, through language such as 'shitty' or the addition of five exclamation marks. Typically, multiple emotions are clustered, as in the following tweet:

> 'When I got into teaching, I knew the job was underappreciated, but I didn't know that I would constantly be referred to as a "lazy babysitter" during a global pandemic while I spend my own money buying cleaning supplies to try to keep my students safe.' (@Twitter5, August 2020)

This quote is an example of the sadness—disappointment or letdown—of feeling underappreciated, the frustration of the predicament, and the worry for safety. The tweets recurrently showed the following:

1. Frustration and anger over the uncertainty of the future and decisions being made about teachers' work without teacher input.
2. Worry over teacher, student, and broader community safety and over how teaching will be made possible in a lockdown world.
3. Sadness about the loss of the typical teaching environment and an undermining of teacher safety and professionalism.

6.2.1. Teachers Should Not Feel or Display Fear

In the earlier research, fear was not mentioned explicitly. Occasionally, it was implied through statements like 'I back-pedalled as he approached'. Implicit fear was again evident throughout this study, such as in this tweet:

> 'I am faced with some tricky decisions this year. Do I close the classroom door to keep my students safe from an active shooter or do I open it to improve air circulation?' (@Twitter6, August 2020)

A hesitation for teachers to express fear, while facing the threats outlined above, was still evident in the tweets—only eleven explicit expressions of fear were evident. A noticeable difference is that words like 'terrified' and 'scared' were used explicitly in four of those tweets, as in this example:

> 'I can be scared for everyone's health and still miss the classroom. I miss the interactions, collaboration, laughter, teaching, lightbulb moments, and more.' (@Twitter2, July 2020)

6.2.2. Teachers Should Not Display Sadness to Students

While sadness in the earlier research was discussed in small groups, and crying was evident or mentioned in a one-to-one interview, it was understood that teachers should not cry in front of their students, as it is a sign of weakness. The current research has found five instances of teachers expressing crying in a public arena—Twitter. Take the following tweet as an example.

> 'Yesterday two students who hadn't seen one another in several months ran together to hug. It brought tears to my eyes...' (@Twitter4, May 2020)

6.2.3. Contentment Is Evoked by the Act of Teaching, by Students and Other Teachers; Happiness Is Evoked by the Act of Teaching and by Students

In ordinary times, teachers might talk about how satisfying it is to see young minds flourish. While there are certainly challenges in teaching, the Sacred Story emphasises that the reward outweighs feelings of defeat. In the earlier work, teachers discussed contentment almost as much as they did an overarching feeling of defeat. A difference in the exploration of teacher emotional rules in a context of crisis is that the mentions of contentment are limited with six references only, and there is a high conflict with the abovementioned emotional rule—24 references in conflict and 8 references in alignment. An example of a tweet in conflict with the rule is the following:

> 'Had my first poor night's sleep of the year due to teacher stress dreams. Is it actually mid-August?' (@Twitter3, August 2020)

In this quote, the entire act of teaching is stressful. The reference to mid-August reminds us that the author harks from the northern hemisphere, where the large summer school break takes place in the middle of the calendar year. In a later tweet, the same author mentions 'going back tomorrow', so the stressful dreams were occurring in anticipation of the academic year ahead.

Contentment and struggle work hand in hand. Dealing with struggle is a typical aspect of daily life. When the struggles outweigh the contentment, then a person might be left with the threat of defeat or a feeling of defeat.

6.2.4. Defeat Is Inherent in Teaching but Must Not Be Shown

Teachers often conjure up courage and positivity to face the typical struggles of the day, which is why 'defeat must not be shown'. Displaying defeat is not conducive to convincing oneself or others that everything will resolve satisfactorily. Teachers have a well-known responsibility to remain calm and manage difficult situations—micro crises if you like—by performing in accordance with the unspoken but negotiated rules. Particularly noticeable about the rules for teachers working through an ongoing crisis is that what would not normally be shown, may sometimes be. We have found 40 'references in conflict', such as the following tweet:

> 'I wouldn't trade my work and I love being back. Having said that... in the last two weeks I've cried about eight times. Teaching in 2020 is definitely a curve ball.' (@Twitter2, September 2020)

The above quote is an example of the relationship between contentment and defeat—they can coexist where the reward of teaching compels a person to continue to do so, but, at the same time, he/she feels threatened by a sense of defeat. At what point would this teacher not 'love being back' at work? At that point, the tweet implies that the feeling of defeat would be overwhelming.

6.2.5. Scepticism Is Permissible

An emotion that was referenced significantly is scepticism; only frustration and defeat were referenced more frequently. It was referenced 41 times and is perhaps a sign of the uncertainty that teachers and society live with in crisis, since a crisis is unexpected and unpredictable. The next tweet exemplifies a widespread scepticism about teachers returning to their workplaces when other professionals are not:

> 'Government buildings are closed due to the pandemic; however, politicians say teachers should go back to school.' (@Twitter2, July 2020)

6.2.6. The Teacher Emotion Narrative in Relation to the Micro Crisis Reveals an Uncover Story

A Cover Story is typically a story shared openly and usually aligns with the Sacred Story, providing cover for the Secret Story that might misalign with the Sacred Story. In this study, the Cover Story was derived from the micro-crises that teachers faced in their

day-to-day lives. The micro-crises were deeply embedded in the macro-crisis; for example, the crisis of walking through a classroom door on a given day yet feeling fearful to do so. While there was some alignment between the Sacred Story and Cover Story, there was also significant discrepancy. An example of alignment is both the Sacred and the Cover Stories recognised that frustration, sadness, worry, and anger can be evoked not only by students but also by colleagues, administrators, governing bodies, and events. Such a broad connection to the emotionality of teaching was less evident in earlier work and may be related to the circumstance of crisis. An example of the departure between the Sacred Story and the Cover Story is that teachers (manifestly and publicly) feel things. Thus, the more prolific expression of emotion is also discrepant from the earlier work in this field, which appears to be in response to the crises (micro and macro) that the teachers have found themselves in. This indicates there is another story to consider, an Uncover Story: the need to reveal, which is felt in opposition to earlier assumptions about a need to conceal. We do not claim that this is a new phenomenon, but that the pandemic has created conditions in which it is increasingly urgent and, hence, newly visible to research.

In crisis, an Uncover Story potentially provides solace. It valorises an element of activism that seeks to shift the status quo because the struggle of teaching is untenable. Recall the credibility-stretching idealism of the Sacred Story in a crisis: it tells a story of strength and positive action, actively avoiding the reality of the challenge and the threat of defeat to focus on motives of hope and courage. By contrast, the Uncover Story is grounded in a congruence with the emotional experiences of teachers. We may characterise it along these lines:

> 'When teaching, I get frustrated, worry, sad and angry, but I do not only feel these things in relation to students. I do feel a lot of sadness about not being able to enjoy my students' company while in lockdown—I miss our interactions. I also feel sad for students who are further disadvantaged due to inequities in the education system (for example, I am constantly reminded that students can only access online classrooms if they have adequate technology).'

> 'I also feel sad for my teacher colleagues because they probably feel like I feel. Those of us who have family commitments find ourselves barely able to look after our own loved ones, terrified that this lethal virus could intervene to make that task impossible any day. Meanwhile our job is to teach and protect the children of so many other families.'

> 'I grieve for the events that I looked forward to like field trips, sport days, music concerts and presentations. All these are cancelled now. I cry often. What I feel mostly is frustrated and worried. I am worried for the safety and wellbeing of my students, me and my family, and the state of the education system.'

> 'Despite my best efforts, will my students learn what is expected? There is a load of professional learning out there, but it is not always appropriate, accessible, or timely—not to mention not having time to undertake the professional learning in the first place. Are we expecting too much? What is most frustrating is that teachers are not factored into the conversation, and I am sceptical about the choices made on my behalf by people who are not in classrooms living with the day-to-day challenges.'

> 'Feelings of anger and fear are growing so that contentment in my work is becoming unreachable, and they are getting harder and harder to face each day. A sense of hope and courage is dissipating, and I am feeling the growing threat of defeat. How long can I keep going?'

Such a narrative aligns with Auger and Formentin's [6]; Cannon, Davis, and Long's [20]; Kim and Asbury's [4]; Nyanjom and Naylor's [8]; and Soncini, Politi, and Matteucci's [9] research in the sense that the difference between what a teacher feels is needed and what is expected is a site of tension. However, the experiences represented in the data show little

'creative mediation' or 'finding a way forward'. This is not to say that these behaviours are not occurring, just that, in a crisis, the most urgent feelings on the surface worthy of sharing via Twitter are the feelings of defeat. It is perhaps a call for help.

6.3. Secret Stories

While we cannot ascertain the Secret Stories nested within the Cover and Sacred Story without interviewing the authors of the tweets, what we can establish is that there is an alternate Cover Story, an Uncover Story that does not align as neatly with the Sacred Story and which the Secret Stories may seep from. The individual teacher Twitter posts were sprinkled with deeply personal content such as crying and being 'terrified', despite the Sacred Story pedalling a narrative of hope and courage. A teacher admitted to 'day drinking', as 'the school year is rough in the world of distance learning'. Another consideration concerning the seepage of the possible Secret Story is that, while emotions are expressed explicitly, many more are implied—they lurk behind the veneer and are visible just enough. So, aspects of the Secret Story became less secret.

7. Final Remarks

One of the major issues with the discrepancy between the Sacred Story and the crisis story is this: above the emotional strain of surviving a crisis on a personal level and beyond the responsibility of caring for children and youth is the emotional strain of not emoting, in alignment with the Sacred Story. What happens when teachers cannot abide by the emotional rules? What happens when they cannot conjure up the necessary emotion to fall in line with the Sacred Story? Wang, Hall, and Taxer [34]; Burić, Kim, and Hodis [36]; and Auger and Formentin [6] all recognise the harm in surface acting emotion. This study suggests that teachers question their capacity to survive and a feeling of defeat looms. In such times, the expectation that teachers remain neutral—emotionless—is perhaps even more problematic than in regular times where teachers employ detrimental surface acting strategies, as, in crisis, some emotions are more urgently felt.

Given the intense scepticism of teachers in this study, teachers appear to feel disregarded. Cannon, Davis, and Long's [20] call for greater consideration of teachers' voices when developing disaster management plans in schools would go some way in reducing that scepticism. However, listening needs to go beyond affording teachers input into a disaster management plan. Since the disparity between the Sacred Story and the alternate Uncover Story feeds into the emotional strain, the Sacred Story needs to shift. The organisations that dictate policy and represent teachers publicly need to consider the reality of the job and reflect that to society. Teachers are people, and, like all people, they feel and react in crisis. Under heightened emotional strain, it is well documented that cognitive functioning is compromised, so when teachers are working as frontline workers in extreme conditions, how can it be logical to expect the same or greater output as in ordinary times of the teaching workforce?

We hope that the present study offers a contribution to current practice with regard to the factors that influence teachers' emotions in the workplace. Beyond extending or improving knowledge of the topic, our research draws attention to the interventions of educational institutions, regulators, professional bodies, teacher-educating bodies such as universities, and other relevant agencies. It reinforces their need to provide support to teachers, including professional development support for the cultivation of explicit emotional consciousness across the teaching profession. Aiming for emotional neutrality prevents teachers from finding a way forward. While teachers are responsible for creating a learning environment that is favourable to the integral development of students, governing and administrative bodies are responsible for enabling teachers to do so.

Furthermore, the knowledge obtained in such a relationship between teachers and educational agencies will be useful in the design of programs and strategies that boost the development of teachers' emotional consciousness, so that they can effectively sense their way through the constant challenges in the workplace, serving as a significant tool

that helps them to process emotions and face challenges that disrupt the balance of the profession. Emotionally speaking, finding a way through crisis sits somewhere between feeling defeated and conjuring up false hope. Teachers need strategies to collectively find a fruitful middle ground. We hope that this will make an explicit and effective contribution to improving the teacher–workplace experience, responding to the challenges of 21st-century education with increasingly self-aware and emotionally reflective approaches. In a word, we serve students better by enabling teachers better.

We acknowledge that a deeper exploration of context matters to the comprehension of emotional rules. This research contains a small sample of teachers' experiences. Further research interrogating specific collectives and their various layers of polity is needed for a more fine-grained understanding. This article gives a broad overview. A further limitation is that tweets are comments made publicly, and there was not an opportunity to follow up with authors through an interview. Therefore, more private thoughts and feelings are not captured. Further research would be required to tease out the Secret Stories or to have a clearer understanding of relevant teacher-related emotional rules in the USA. Also, further research is necessary to better understand the potential framework of emotional support that might be best suited to any given location, particularly since emotion is not easily pinned down, and emotional work has a collective dimension that is dependent on the specific people within the collective. We very much look forward to discussions and collaborations with researchers who are interested in advancing this agenda.

The Sacred Story is a collective story in which the most powerful voices have the greatest influence over the flow of narrative. There is recognition in the Sacred Story that care is required, and it is framed as self-care. There are risks with the reliance on self-care as mitigation of emotional conflict for teachers in crisis. Self-care places the responsibility for care on the self—back on the teacher. Cannon, Davis, and Long [20] propose a self-care model but also recognise the limitation of resources and excess teacher workload amid a crisis. So, as well as navigating what is already recognised as an emotionally taxing role, i.e., teaching, teachers need to manage the crisis, care for students and families, care for their families and colleagues, and for themselves in an environment of limited resources. There needs to be an approach toward self-care that is nested within collective care. Collective care ensures that the forces of power influencing the Sacred Story also ensure that resources to engage in self-care are available so that the Sacred Story is possible. It is not enough to recognise the considerable work teachers undertake amid circumstances and expect them to place their needs second to their students—which Cannon, Davis, and Long [20] confirm that teachers are doing since the pandemic's onset. In addition to extra time and funds to ensure that increased workload is managed, a specific structure of emotional support is necessary (see Hopman [27] for a potential support structure).

Even before the breadth and depth of COVID-19 were well understood, Clark et al. [1] (p. 605) noted that 'climate change, ecological degradation, migrating populations, conflict, pervasive inequalities, and predatory commercial practices threaten the health and future of children in every country'. Society faces an uncertain future where recent global experiences of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters are expected to continue to roll into the future. If teachers are going to be positioned as crisis frontline workers going forward, then they need to be considered vital resources themselves, and future policy must invest in their wellbeing to ensure the wellbeing of generations to come, particularly in times of crisis.

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