Creating and Using the *Persona* in Teaching:
Challenges of Connection and Control

by

Martha Curren-Preis

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Doctoral Committee:

      Professor Deborah Loewenberg Ball, Chair
      Assistant Professor Chandra L. Alston
      Professor Linda Gregerson
      Professor Carla O'Connor

Martha Curren-Preis

marthacp@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-3698-1256

DEDICATION

For Julie Preis

My tireless editor and teacher

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ABSTRACT

Because teaching is inherently interpersonal and relational work, teachers use expressive behaviors such as voice, body language, and facial expression as they interact in the classroom. Yet the effects of the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice on their relationships with children and their instruction are not well-understood in education. This dissertation investigates and conceptualizes this expressive domain in teaching, which it refers to as "creating and using a *persona*," or "*persona work*."

This study draws on classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student focus groups and surveys to explore patterns in teachers' *persona work* and unearth its purposes. Specifically, it employs multiple case study analysis to describe the expressive practice of six White, female, experienced and "expert" teachers. It also shows how the 220 students across these teachers' diverse middle school English language arts and social studies classrooms responded to their *persona work*. Taken together, findings from this dissertation show that the teachers' *persona work* was central to their instruction and relationships with children, and that it had the power to create as well as limit opportunities for children.

The teachers in this study used their expressive behaviors to control and shape interactional conditions in the classroom. Their *persona work* helped teachers engage children and maintain their attention, lent clarity to teachers' explanations, communicated teachers' expectations, and otherwise augmented teachers' instructional and relational goals. However, teachers' *persona work* was not always successful, and did not always benefit every child. In particular, especially among children of color, teachers' *persona work* could also be inequitable and could communicate a lack of care or intellectual regard. As this study shows, although teachers' *persona work* might help some children learn and engage, it can also limit other children's opportunities in classrooms, especially among students from historically marginalized backgrounds.

This study has important ramifications for teaching and teacher education, especially in relation to cross-cultural teaching contexts. Without growing teachers' abilities to create and use

personas in the classroom in ways that are just, equitable, and responsive to all children, the field continues to relegate to chance teachers' mastery over this ubiquitous, influential, but until now underdeveloped domain of teaching practice. This, in turn, will continue to put young people—and especially children of color—dangerously at risk.

Chapter 1

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In one classroom management course I taught, I remember how my preservice teachers struggled with the assignment of giving directions to elementary students. Most of them created detailed, thoughtful scripts of what they planned to say, but when it came to *enacting* the directions, they sounded like they were talking to a group of friends, or perhaps to a clerk at a store. Their gaze never seemed to "land" on children and some even stood facing away from children's desks. Their words often bunched together or trailed off. Some gestured steadily; others moved back and forth across the front of the room. All told, when these preservice teachers gave simple classroom directions, I found it difficult to know where to look or what was important. In many cases, the teachers' ways of talking and being seemed disorienting to the children. Often, children did not seem to be paying attention at all. Once the teachers completed their directions, some children would do exactly the opposite of what was asked of them; others did nothing at all. In general, the teachers' directions did not seem connected to the classroom and the people in it. It was as if they were producing words without connecting to the children in front of them.

The plight of these new teachers parallels the difficulties Foster (2006) spoke of when describing the trials of new clergy, who similarly struggled to connect with parishioners despite carefully-planned and artful sermons. The challenge, Foster argued, was that these novices had "technical proficiency, but not spiritual proficiency" (p. 180). Foster felt their performances lacked a sense of life and personal investment, and that the novice clergy did not consider the responses and needs of the parishioners when delivering their sermons. Likewise, these preservice teachers understood in everyday terms what it meant to "give directions." They often even knew some of the principles of effective direction-giving. But inside a live relational context, their performances appeared to be missing something. The teachers did not enact those directions expressively in ways that were connected to the children in the room.

I remember how, as I grew to be a more experienced teacher, I learned to use my voice and body in ways that helped me gain the children's attention and connect with many children in the class. When giving directions myself, for example, I remember how I would hold my shoulders back, stand ramrod straight, and gesture with my hands, all while speaking in a voice that grew increasingly loud and more intense. As I talked, I would also furrow my brow and slowly, forcefully, scan the room. Sometimes I caught the eyes of a child and smiled. She would do the same. Sometimes I tilted my chin up high and looked down at another student as he slumped in his chair. He sat taller. Sometimes I widened my eyes and paused abruptly. In response, the children sitting in front of me leaned forward, as if in anticipation. I felt magnetic.

Yet, the difficulties my preservice teachers faced reminded me that I too was not always as skillful as I thought I was. I recalled how the way I used my voice, body, and other aspects of self appeared to work for *most* children, but did not always work for *all* of them. During my directions, many children sat silently, their expressions eager and watchful. Several, however, slumped in their chairs, closed their eyes, or turned their backs to me. I remember children who laughed as I talked, and one especially who would often stare right back at me and repeat everything I said in a low mocking voice. I also remember the panic I felt in these moments, and the sense of being out of control. I knew that what I was doing simply was not working for every child—and I had no idea why, or what to do about it. I could sense the tenuous grasp I had on keeping the children in my classroom focused.

Novice teachers rarely receive explicit instruction in how to manage voice, body, expression, and other aspects of their expressive performance when interacting with children. Moreover, research on teaching has produced few accounts that center on the expressive dimensions of teachers' work. The goal of this dissertation is to foreground this domain of practice as a central demand of teaching, to probe and analyze it, and to conceptualize what it might entail.

Rationale for the Centrality of Expressive Performances: Three Propositions

The rationale for the dissertation is grounded in three propositions related to teaching, each of which is elaborated further below: (1) teaching work is human work, and teachers' expressive behaviors are thus an inherent and ubiquitous part of instruction; (2) teachers'

expressive behaviors shape interactions among teachers, children, the subject matter, and the classroom environment; and (3) teachers' expressive behaviors might be especially important and influential in cross-cultural contexts where the identities and experiences of teachers and children differ.

Proposition One: Teaching Work is Human Work

Teaching is heavily interactional work, comprising interactions among teachers, children, and the content (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003). When engaging with children around the subject matter, teachers deploy expressive behaviors such as voice, body language, and expression, although they might not always do so consciously in ways that are productive, logical, and responsive. As Watzlawick and Beavin (1967) argued, in all contexts built on human interaction—such as teaching—people transmit messages through their verbal and nonverbal expressive displays, whether intentionally or not. Thus, the success or failure of teaching in any specific case is at least partially dependent on how teachers deploy these resources of *self*. Regardless of teachers' consciousness of such expressive behaviors, they are nevertheless always enacting them, and how they do so is visible to and possibly shapes how their students read and react to them.

In any interactional context, how one chooses to animate the voice, body, and other aspects of *self* can amplify one's communicative purpose, or can confuse and even undermine one's meaning. The exclamation "I am so happy to see you!" takes on a different connotation when accompanied by a direct gaze and a frown, for example, or a wavering smile and a quick blinking of the eyes. The same exclamation can also mean different things to different audiences, and can be interpreted differently depending on the interactional context. How and when something is said, along with what else one does expressively while saying it, are as central for communicating meaning as the words themselves (Ekman, 1993; Jasinski, 2008; Porter & Samovar, 1991).

Managing one's expressive behaviors responsively, productively, and strategically when interacting with different people is something very few people do well, or at least not all the time. As scholars of interpersonal communication have pointed out, it is often difficult for individuals to notice, let alone control, disparate resources of *self,* such as voice or body, during human interaction (Boden, 1990; DePaulo, 1992; Goffman, 1959, 2005; Lander, Hill, Kamachi, & Vatikiotis-Bateson, 2007; Landy, 1996; Leary, 1995; Watzlawick & Beavin, 1967). As a

result, individuals might inadvertently signal through their expressive behaviors something that confuses, undermines, or softens their meaning and intended purpose. Likewise, they might also alienate or offend interaction partners through these expressive displays.

Luckily, many interactional exchanges occur fleetingly, in contexts that are relatively low-stakes. Especially in casual, short-lived interactions, it does not seem to matter if one appears particularly interested or engaged or whether one's gestures augment or confuse one's utterances. Even in professional contexts, individuals can still be considered successful and inoffensive when their expressive behaviors seem stilted or ill-timed. In fact, in many professions individuals are expected to exert only moderate control over the expressive dimensions of their work. For example, it might be normal (if distracting) for one's colleague to make strange or exaggerated "thinking" faces during a meeting, or to avoid making eye contact altogether with others at the table. Similarly, it may be common for colleagues to interrupt and speak over one another, to talk for overly long, or to adopt a distracted or impatient expression when others share ideas.

Although such expressive behaviors are usually not desirable, and in some cases are downright inappropriate or strange, they are also not typically seen as central factors for determining job performance. In other words, many people are still considered "good at their job" even when they struggle for expressive control. Although individuals' expressive behaviors might *contribute* to individuals' professional success, they are typically not the *reason* for it.

Not so in teaching. In a classroom, a teacher's expressive behaviors play a major role in her capacity to connect with and instruct children. Children continually draw conclusions about teachers' expressive behaviors "whether one wants them to or not and whether they want to or not" (DePaulo, 1992, p. 205). Without learning to manage their expressive behaviors skillfully, teachers run the risk of jeopardizing their instructional and relational goals. Yet teachers' expressive behaviors in the classroom have typically been relegated to chance, instinct, or habit, and have been allotted little attention in educational research.

Proposition Two: Expressive Behaviors are Fuel for Classroom Interactions

Schooling is compulsory. As Jackson (1990) argued, children are compelled to spend countless hours in classrooms each day. Because classrooms typically comprise 30 or more children, the time and activities of young people are often regimented and ritualized so teachers can retain a modicum of order and control. Lortie (1975) pointed out that if teachers are to

accomplish anything at all, let alone bring about the learning of these groups, teachers often feel that children must comply with what teachers expect. Waller (1932) also argued that teachers are traditionally the purveyors of the social order in classrooms, and that children must therefore conform to their rules, rituals, and routines.

Yet to effectively teach children, it is also teachers' responsibility to help children feel successful and loved, even within the background chatter, anonymity and incessant activity of what Jackson termed the "crowds" (1990, p. 10) of the classroom. Teachers must motivate and instruct entire "batches" (Ball & Forzani, 2009) of children, while simultaneously ensuring they meet the diverse, unique needs of individuals and small groups. They must engage children, draw their attention, direct them, convince them, manage them, and otherwise persuade young people to participate in and comply with teachers' own expectations for classroom life. Teachers' charge is mighty, and creates an overriding, endemic problem in teaching that, I argue, teachers' expressive behaviors can help manage.

Teaching is fundamentally interactional work, defined by ongoing, simultaneous, and dynamic interactions between the teacher, the children, and the content (Cohen et al., 2003). I argue that this model of dynamic interaction (Figure 1.1) hinges on the expressive dimensions of teachers' work. Teachers' expressive behaviors, such as their use of voice, their patterns of calling on children, and their apparent enthusiasm or interest while instructing or engaging with children act as mediators of classroom interaction. For example, teachers might use expression or voice to highlight things they especially want children to notice, or to emphasize critical aspects of the content. They can infuse enthusiasm into their explanations to make them even more compelling for young people. They can manage their proximity to children, touch, or eye contact to help children feel acknowledged, listened to, and loved.

In other words, teachers' expressive behaviors can help facilitate their connections with children, flag aspects of the content teachers find especially important, and negotiate children's own response to and understanding of the subject matter. Essentially, teachers' expressive performances can serve as "fuel" for interactions in the classroom. Depending on how teachers speak or move, what they emphasize or downplay, and what they convey though their expression or manner, teachers' expressive behaviors can impact the nature and shape of a wide range of classroom interactions.
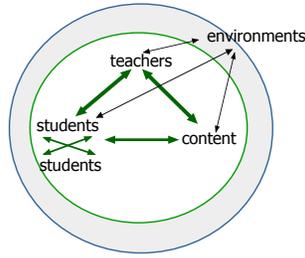
Adapted from "Resources, Instruction, and Research" (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 124)

Figure 1.1. *Teaching as Interaction*

Proposition Three: Expressive Behaviors are Critical in Cross-Cultural Contexts

Teachers must also facilitate productive interactions in the classroom in the face of student resistance. Waller characterized such resistance as children's natural "negative interest in that feudal superstructure" of schooling (Waller, 1932, p. 196), and McLaren termed children's opposition "the antistructure of [student] resistance" (McLaren, 1993, p. 145). These descriptions point to another, endemic problem in classrooms that teachers' expressive behaviors can either exacerbate or help manage: the extent to which teachers can influence and engage *all*, rather than most or only some of the children in classrooms through their expressive behaviors, and how they might do so. This is taken up below.

In U.S. schools, classrooms grow increasingly diverse, while the teaching force remains largely White, middle class, and female. This means many (White) teachers work in schools where children's backgrounds and experiences differ from the teachers' own (Feistritzer, 2011; Grant & Secada, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2006). This growing cultural hybridity of classrooms is merely a central characteristic of schooling, and not in itself problematic. Historically, however, deficit notions have been attributed to certain individuals and groups because of their "difference," and deficit thinking has led children to be labeled "at risk" due to their membership in historically marginalized groups (Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009). As a result, the increasing diversity of classrooms and the fact that many teachers find themselves working in cross-cultural contexts for the first time potentially brings with it several negative consequences.

As Michael and his colleagues argued (Michael, Coleman-King, Lee, Ramirez, & Bentley-Edwards, 2012), the fact that teaching has historically been a profession dominated by White, middle class females "reinscribes cultural practices in schools that reward students in possession of those cultural norms, and punish those who are not—largely students of color and

students living in poverty" (p. 35). Researchers have explored, for example, teachers' reluctance to name or examine the implications of their own racial and cultural identity and privilege, and have documented teachers' hesitation to engage in conversations with young people about identity, race, and culture (Castagno, 2008; Delpit, 1988; Pollock, 2004; Schultz, 2003).

Irvine (1990) suggested that racial and cultural differences between teachers and their students can lead to communicative misinterpretations and relational disconnects. She called this a lack of "cultural synchronization." Irvine argued that because teachers and children do not always share common understanding of unstated norms and rules of communication and interaction in the classroom, their interpretation of one another's verbal and nonverbal patterns of communication and interactional styles can misfire. This, in turn, can lead to myriad problems, especially between White teachers and children of color.[1]

Heath (1983), for example, specifically flagged examples of discursive differences in the practice of questioning between White middle class teachers and Black children that could be problematic. She showed, on one hand, how White teachers typically favored the questioning styles of the White middle class children in their classrooms. Because these children's discursive patterns coincided with the teachers' own, teachers were more likely to praise them or respond more quickly. In contrast, teachers sometimes failed to recognize, praise or respond to the questioning practices of many Black or lower income children in their classrooms, given the cultural differences between these children's styles of questioning and the teachers' own.

Rex (2006) also looked at discursive mismatches between teachers and children. She described how one White high school English teacher, Stan, misinterpreted his Black students'

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[1] It is important note here and elsewhere that I do not mean to take an essentialist stance by generalizing about individuals' preferences or practices based on their race, culture, or ethnicity. However, dominant notions and expectations perpetuated by principally White teachers have historically governed classrooms (Boucher, 2016; Delpit, 1988; Paris & Alim, 2014; Picower, 2009), and "children of color"—be they Black, Latinx, Native American, multiracial or multiethnic —have historically been treated as "other" (Alim, 2011; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Given this division, labels like "White" teachers and "children of color" act as useful symbols of typical divisions of marginalization and discrimination that have characterized many classrooms. However, I recognize there is a vast degree of heterogeneity and intersectionality in individuals' identities and within social groups (Borrero & Yeh, 2011; Cole, 2009; O'Connor, Hill, & Robinson, 2009), and that such diversity and nuance can be lost by grouping children together as "students of color," or by making broad distinctions between the behaviors and experiences of White teachers and students from historically marginalized groups. I also recognize that within each of these categories—e.g., "White," "Black," "children of color," etc.—there is a great deal of variety in terms of communication patterns, values, and cultural preferences.

signifying—trading of playful insults—as being disruptive rather than constructive for building relationships among children. However, for many Black children *signifying* was a key source of connection, affection, and respect. Like Rex and Heath, Wortham (2004) also highlighted a lack of synchronization in discursive style in the classroom. He described how many White teachers switched from viewing one child, a Black girl named Tyisha, as "good" to seeing her as "disruptive." Wortham argued that the change in teachers' assessments of Tyisha emerged primarily from their preexisting negative assumptions about Black children's behavior and communication patterns, and from specific misunderstandings they had about Tyisha's discourse style and meaning.

Researchers have also argued that teachers' broader conceptions about and instinctive ways of relating to children may be problematic in cross-cultural contexts. For example, many empirical accounts show how White teachers perceive children of color—and Black boys especially—as older than they are, as oppositional or criminal, and as less capable academically (Boucher, 2016; Davis, 2003; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Knight, 2014; Nasir, Ross, Mckinney de Royston, Givens, & Bryant, 2013; Noguera, 2003; Paris & Alim, 2014a). These and other negative conceptions about children can perpetuate inequitable distributions of opportunity and power in the classroom and send implicit messages about students' abilities (O'Connor, Hill, & Robinson, 2009; Steele, 2011). Although students of color do not necessarily start school as "at risk" learners, teachers' negative views of children can ultimately also have deleterious effects on children's academic achievement (O'Connor et al., 2009).

As Waller (1932) suggested, teachers' "unconscious attitudes are likely to show themselves more plainly in that general behavior than in teacher's conscious thoughts. Even where the teacher's unconscious attitude is not clearly grasped [by the teacher], it frequently influences the child's situation" (p. 320). Most children, Waller believed, were not just aware of, but also fundamentally influenced by teachers' views of them. They continually "read" teachers' verbal and nonverbal signals for clues about teachers' feelings about children's personalities, abilities, and capacities. Waller argued that children are so attuned to the impressions teachers convey through their verbal and nonverbal teaching performances that many internal the views they perceived teachers had of them and began to believe in them themselves. Other children, said Waller, typically respond to their negative perception of teachers' verbal and nonverbal

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behaviors and general teaching style with resistance by, for example, refusing to comply with directions or declining to engage in class.

As did Waller, I argue that teachers' expressive behaviors may be instrumental in conveying information to children about teachers' beliefs, values, and expectations. Especially in contexts characterized by cross-cultural interaction, teachers' expressive work may appear to privilege certain cultural norms and interactional styles over others, and may confuse or alienate some—or all—children. Depending on their expressive patterns, teachers may need to learn more about how their expressive behaviors are seen and experienced by different children in their classrooms. They may also need to develop more "cultural or linguistic flexibility" (Paris & Alim, 2014) in their expressive work. Teachers might also have to "unlearn" expressive behaviors that are harmful to some or all students, or that detract from their instructional or relational goals (Ball & Forzani, 2009).

Overview of the Study

Engaging in the expressive dimensions of human interaction is easy. We do it continually, automatically, and often unconsciously. But for teachers, the more complex and challenging task is to manage expressive behaviors and patterns in a way that facilitates productive classroom relationships and maximizes children's learning. Further, despite the centrality of teachers' expressive behaviors to critical facets of teaching (as I argued in the three propositions above) the field of education has largely left teachers' expressive behaviors to chance. It knows little about what the dimensions of teachers' expressive work entail, how expressive behaviors facilitate or impede productive classroom interactions, or how they might be learned. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to conceptualize the expressive domain of work in teaching.

Study Design

This dissertation draws on qualitative data to make propositions about what expressive behaviors might entail in productive classroom interactions. However, my intent is not to identify the most "effective" expressive behaviors in the classroom. Rather, the purpose of this dissertation is to provide an early explanatory frame for articulating the dimension of expressive work in teaching. I propose to show how expressive behaviors may aid teachers in connecting

with their students and influence their broader instruction and children's relationship to the content.

To learn more about teachers' expressive behaviors, I conducted a four-month qualitative study. The study included six middle school teachers, over 200 students, and eight English language arts or social studies classrooms. The teachers were all White, female, and middle class, and each had at least seven years of experience. The classrooms themselves were diverse, with between 50 to 80 percent of the students in each identifying as children of color.

I conducted approximately six observations in each classroom. I also held several interviews with each teacher, conducted focus groups with children and distributed surveys to the students after every observed class. In total, data sources included approximately 70 hours of observation, 15 teacher interviews, 10 student focus groups, and 600 student surveys. I used constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2009) and Yin's "explanation building" framework for multiple case study analysis (Yin, 2013) to identify patterns across data sources. Analysis was informed by theoretical frameworks emerging from theories of interaction and power, and from the model of classroom interaction depicted by Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball's "instructional triangle" (2003).

Key Terminology and the Construct of *Persona Work*

Currently in education, there is no agreed-upon name in the field for the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice. The fact this idea is rarely mentioned at all in the research on teaching (let alone granted a common name) instead highlights its underconceptualization in the field. It also makes writing about the concept problematic. Because I needed to concisely and consistently name this expressive domain of teaching in this study, and because I wanted to separate it from other constructs in the educational literature on teaching practice, I decided to grant the expressive dimensions of teaching a name. In this dissertation, I call it *persona work*, or creating and using a *persona*.

I settled on the term *persona work* for several reasons. First, I want it to signal the relationship between the expressive dimensions of teaching and the teacher's "personhood." *Persona work* requires, for instance, that individuals deploy personal resources, such as voice, body, expression, and other aspects of *self* when communicating with children and about the content. *Persona work* is also likely informed by teachers' personal identity and experience, and is rooted in teachers' personal agency.

The language of *persona work* also allows me to capitalize on the historical and classical etymology of the word "persona," which similarly relates to ideas of identity, the self, and performances of personhood. The word "persona" originally derived from Latin. It signified the wearing of masks and the voice modulation of actors in classical Greek and Roman theater. Many scholars have since applied and extended this definition of "persona," and the term has taken on myriad of related meanings. Medieval Catholic philosopher Boethius later referred to "persona" in his theological writing, for example, defining it as "one of two natures." Other medieval scholars began to associate "persona" with actors themselves. Their idea was that, rather than simply donning a mask (and later removing it), actors essentially *became* different personas, such as through embodying the mannerisms, perspectives, and behaviors of the roles they performed. Much later, psychotherapist Jung (1917) further extended the usage of the term "persona," arguing that a *persona* was the impression or image that individuals projected when interacting with others. How they did so, Jung believed, coincided with their perceived social role and reflected what they desired from others.

As Landy (1996) pointed out in her book *Persona and Performance*, the idea of "persona" has also long permeated the world of art and culture. Shakespeare, for example, was preoccupied with conceptions of "self" and the idea of playing a role. In *Hamlet*, the character Polonius urges his son Laertes, "to thine own self be true," and in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players." Author Mary Shelley played somewhat differently with the idea of "persona," drawing out its meaning as a split "self" through her creation of the characters of Dr. Frankenstein and his monster. Robert Louis Stevenson similarly leveraged this metaphor or dueling selves in his creation of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Artist Frida Kahlo created multiple self-portraits that depicted different aspects of her own multiple personas, such as in her portraits "Hairless" and "Diego on my Mind." Most recently, "persona" has been used in connection with the multiple identities and characters constructed by individuals for role-playing games or in online chat forums (Barbour & Marshall, 2012; Hernacki & Satish, 2012; Waskul & Lust, 2004).

In this dissertation, the term *persona work* is meant to echo this wealth of historical and cultural meaning. Most literally, this study takes up the idea of "masking," by describing the work teachers do in their classrooms to hide or suppress instinctive emotions and reactions. The dissertation also alludes to the changeable and multiplicitous nature of "persona," and likewise

touches on the relationship (and conflict) between a "persona" and the idea of one "true" self. Finally, this dissertation considers the transactional nature of "persona," such as was suggested by Jung. It explores, for example, how teachers' *persona work* both influenced and was informed by children's own experiences and understandings, and describes ways teachers' *persona work* shifted depending on what teachers did, when, and with whom.

A final reason I coined the phrase *persona work* to describe teachers' expressive work is to capture the action and agency implied through the word "work." "Work" connotes a continual effort and a constant striving. It is not static, but ongoing. "Work" also implies a sense of purpose. *Persona work*, likewise, is continually present. Additionally, as with the construct of "work," it is also often purposeful. Further, like "work" itself, *persona work* entails not just effort and action, but can also imply some level of discomfort. For example, in this dissertation, teachers sometimes faced challenges in maintaining productive or equitable *persona work* or aligning it appropriately to their instructional or relational purpose. They also sometimes struggled to adopt expressive roles and attitudes that differed from how they might "naturally" expressively communicate or behave in other contexts.

I suggest *persona work* entails several facets of expressive work. These are outlined in Figure 2.1 and described below:

- The term includes teachers' ongoing expressive behaviors related to their deployment of resources of *self* like voice, body, expression, and so on.
- *Persona work* also relates to the broader impression or tone communicated by teachers' expressive performance. For example, in different settings teachers might deploy expressive behaviors in ways that feel warmer, funnier, stricter, and so on.
- Lastly, *persona work* implies the patterns implicit in teachers' expressive behaviors and demeanors. For example, teachers might act in ways that are consistently expressively different when engaging with different children or when doing different things with the instructional content.
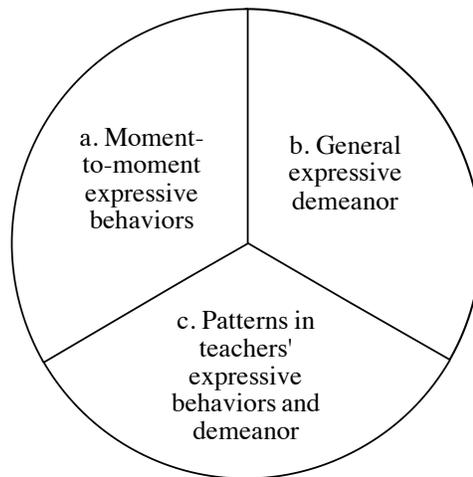
Figure 1.2. *Components of* Persona Work

Research Questions and Contributions of the Study

Three research questions framed this study:

1. What was the content, form, and structure of teachers' *persona work*?

    - How did teachers talk about their *persona work*, and to what extent were they intentional in its use?

    - How did teachers' creation and use of *persona* compare across classrooms? What patterns emerged in teachers' *persona work?*

2. What were the purposes of teachers' *persona work*?

    - What did teachers' *persona work* appear to help them do?

    - What are some of the issues and considerations that arose in teachers' *persona work,* considering these purposes?

3. How did the children think about teachers' *persona work*?

    - What did children notice about it? How did they react to it?

Through its research questions, this dissertation names and highlights a ubiquitous but largely overlooked aspect of teaching practice. It explores the ongoing dimensions of teachers' expressive practice as teachers instruct and connect with children. Based on the findings of this study, I argue that *persona work* was central to teachers' approaches to instruct, engage, and

influence children in their classrooms. It was highly visible to students, and thus mediated teachers' relationships with them, as well as between children and the instructional content.

Specifically, this study offers multidimensional insight into this expressive dimension of teachers' practice by considering both what teachers and children think about *persona work* and describing what teachers expressively do in the classroom. It intentionally investigates teachers' *persona work* in contexts where teachers engage with children racially and culturally similar and different from them, and it sheds light on how *persona work* can be used by teachers to control and maintain productive classroom interactions for *most* children. Simultaneously, the study shows how *persona work* can also perpetuate patterns of inequity for others in the classroom. Findings from this dissertation can help the field consider how best to prepare teachers to engage with all—rather than just some—young people through their *persona work* in ways that are just, equitable and responsive. This analysis can therefore inform teacher education and future research on teaching.

Additional Terminology

In addition to the term "*persona work*" and its affiliated phrases (e.g., expressive behaviors), this section provides a guide to several other terms I use in this dissertation as I describe and synthesize my findings. These terms include "orchestrate," which I argue is how teachers manage and coordinate classroom interactions through their *persona work*. Additional common terms also include "control," "connection," and "regard," which I assert are the specific expressive channels through which teachers often engaged in *persona work* in this study. The descriptions below are meant to offer a general framework to guide the reader in how I am conceiving of each term. I describe analytic advantages that led me to this particular language, and the limitations of such language. I also revisit these terms and their associated meanings at later points in this dissertation.

Orchestrate. In this dissertation, I use the term "orchestrate" to describe different ways *persona work* might coordinate the dynamic conditions of classroom interaction among teachers, children, the content, and the broader classroom environment. I might have used other words to describe this phenomenon, such as "coordinate" or "manage." However, such terms are commonly used and recognizable in the educational literature, and thus may trigger specific interpretations and understandings about the construct that I did not intend.

I also chose the term "orchestrate" because I wanted to capitalize on some of the different meanings of the word, which are described here. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "orchestrate" means "to arrange or direct to produce a desired effect"[2]. Teachers must likewise arrange and direct interactional conditions to ensure children can learn.

The Collaborative International Dictionary of English additionally defines "orchestrate" as "to be the chief coordinator of an activity requiring action by more than one person."[3] This latter definition implies not just that one directs or coordinates activities when "orchestrating," but also that these activities typically entail multiple actors. This definition also indicates that the work of orchestration is powered by a single individual. Likewise, teachers typically have the sole responsibility for orchestrating classroom interaction among multiple children.

I additionally leverage the musical significance of the term "orchestrate" in my unpacking of the term. As a conductor might with a group of musicians, teachers also need to "orchestrate" the interests, behaviors, and academic work of children in ways that are not only coherent, but that bring these variables together around some shared end in ways that feel complementary.

Additionally, in an orchestra the musicians themselves are not powerless, nor are children in classrooms. Instead, the musicians have a major role in shaping the music of the orchestra, just as children can strongly influence instruction and relationships in the classroom. Similarly, the content, classroom environment, and other conditions of classroom interaction come with their own shaping power—just as, in the context of an orchestra, the musical score and venue can also influence the final performance.

Expressive channels of orchestration. As described above, I am calling teachers' continual coordination and shaping of conditions of classroom interaction "orchestration." However, I argue that the ways teachers engage in orchestration through their *persona work* can look very different, such as by falling into different expressive "channels." Specifically, teachers might orchestrate classroom interaction through the expressive channels of "control,"

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[2] Orchestrate. (n.d.) In Oxford English dictionary. Retrieved from
http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/132291?redirectedFrom=orchestrate#eid
[3] Orchestrate. (n.d.) In The collaborative international dictionary of English. Retrieved
from http://gcide.gnu.org.ua/?q=orchestrate&define=Define&strategy=.

"connection," or "regard"—or through a combination of all three. In the sections below, I briefly describe each.

  Control. One way this study shows that teachers might use *persona work* to orchestrate conditions of classroom interaction is through the expressive channel of "control." Historically in the research on teaching, the idea of "control" has carried an extremely negative connotation. The term has been used to describe, for example, the ways teachers' instructional decisions or the structure of schooling have limited opportunities for children and perpetuated racism and inequity in the classroom.

  In contrast, especially for the teachers in this study, "control" meant something much more neutral. In fact, the teachers intimated that it was only through "control" that *productive* interactions in the classroom might occur. For instance, only by exerting "control" through their *persona work* did teachers believe they could keep children's attention or encourage their engagement. As I will describe in Chapter 5, the teachers thus saw "control" not as harmful, but as a necessary condition for accomplishing anything at all instructionally or relationally in the classroom.

  Given the historically negative connotation of term "control" in educational research, I initially hesitated to use it to describe this expressive channel of *persona work*. I ultimately did so, however, for several reasons. First, I used it to honor the teachers' own language and the frequency with which they themselves used the term. Second, the children too often used the term—both positively and negatively—when referring to teachers' *persona work*, and I likewise wanted to reflect the words of these young people. I also used "control" because of its suggestion of a differential power distribution between teachers and children. Regardless of how well-meaning teachers were, often when exercising this expressive channel through their *persona work* they did so in ways that were "top down," such as by imposing their own priorities and preferences on children.

  In general, when I refer to the expressive channel of "control" in this dissertation, I do not always mean expressive displays that were egregiously unjust or inequitable—although certainly that was sometimes the case. I also use the term to refer more generally to moments when teachers used *persona work* to intentionally shape children's attitudes and impose their own ideas about what was important and why, or to provide strong or subtle direction—both positive and negative—about what children ought to be doing, when, and with whom.

Connection. A second expressive channel through which I described teachers orchestrating classroom interaction is "connection." I chose this word because, as I will show in Chapter 6, "connection" was also cited by many children to illustrate what they hoped for in their expressive interactions with teachers. Likewise, it was a word the teachers themselves frequently used (as evident in Chapter 5) to explain what they felt children needed and wanted from teachers' expressive performances.

By "connection," I mean to imply two things about teachers' *persona work*. First, I use it to refer to the relative care teachers expressively displayed for individual children and groups of children through their *persona work*. Specifically, I mean it to indicate the extent to which teachers conveyed a "liking" for children through their *persona work*, such as by appearing to expressively notice them, smile at them, listen to them, and so on.

Second, I use "connection" to refer to the ways and the extent to which teachers' seemed to "know" children. As this study will show, for example, sometimes teachers actively engaged children in conversations about both their personal lives and their academic thinking, sometimes they did only one or the other, and sometimes they made little effort to "know" children at all.

Regard. A final expressive "channel" through which, I argue, teachers can orchestrate classroom interaction relates to teachers' expressive displays of "regard." Although closely related to the expressive channel of "connection," I use "regard" to mean something slightly different. The term refers to the ways teachers appeared to acknowledge, notice, appreciate, listen to, and respect children academically, as thinkers and learners, through their *persona work*.

For example, teachers communicated their expressive regard for children by creating equitable opportunities for students to participate in class or by affirming children's academic contributions through their verbal and nonverbal expressive behaviors. At other points, teachers' expressive regard for children largely seemed nonexistent in their *persona work*, or seemed to convey that teachers valued children as people but not as intellectuals.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. This chapter frames the research problem, provides an overview of the study, and introduces the concept of *persona work* and other key terminology related to the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical perspectives that inform this study design and reviews the literature

related to teachers' *persona work*. Chapter 3 describes the data sources and methods of analysis I used in this study.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I present the results of my analysis. Specifically, I explore teachers' *persona work* from three different perspectives. Chapter 4 uses observational data from teachers' classrooms to depict patterns across teachers' expressive behaviors. Chapter 4 also considers the larger purposes for teachers' *persona work*.

Chapter 5 draws on interviews with teachers to describe how the teachers themselves conceptualized *persona work*. It shows why they did—or did not—think their *persona work* was important. Chapter 5 revisits the purposes of *persona work* from the perspectives of the teachers. It also shows how—according to the teachers themselves—they were differentially effective in achieving those purposes.

Chapter 6 turns to the students. It explores how children talked about teachers' *persona work* and how they were impacted by it. It also highlights moments when children felt teachers' *persona work* was unjust or inequitable. It uses these examples of problematic *persona work* to again revisit ideas about the purposes of *persona work* and its effects on children.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter 7, in which I consider the implications of the study and pose directions for future research.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES

The goal of this dissertation is to unpack the concept of *persona work* and to consider the connection between it, classroom instruction, and teachers' relationships with children. I argued in the previous chapter that *persona work* entails three different categories of communication: teachers' moment-to-moment expressive behaviors; their expressive patterns; and their broader expressive demeanors within and across class periods. Specifically, this literature review is meant to better explain these different facets of teachers' *persona work*.

No single account provides a comprehensive explanatory framework for how teachers' *persona work* functions or what it entails. Instead, the expressive dimensions of teaching have historically been overlooked and underdeveloped in the research. Despite the ubiquitous and arguably central place of *persona work* in classroom interaction, the field still knows very little about what the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice entail or how they work. In fact, no single account articulates the relationship between the expressive dimensions of teaching and teachers' instruction and relationships with children. Relatedly, there is no training for teachers provided in what this study calls their *persona work*. Instead, its development has been left largely to chance.

However, taken together, the varying empirical and theoretical accounts reviewed here articulate different *aspects* of teachers' *persona work*, and are thus still useful for helping to explain how the expressive dimensions of teaching function and what they entail. In this review of the empirical and theoretical perspectives, I therefore consider how each strand of research below separately contributes to the larger idea of *persona work*. From this review emerges the underpinnings of a theoretical framework and important theoretical considerations that will guide my investigation and analysis of the expressive dimensions of teachers' work.

Organization of the Chapter and Overview of the Literature

I begin this review with a theoretical discussion. I describe three theories related to interaction: impression management, speech code theory, and theories about power. Each illuminate a separate facet of human interaction that pertains to teachers' *persona work*. I use these theories in tandem to elucidate important considerations related to the construct and how it functions, and to frame the remainder of my literature review.

Next, I briefly examine how other fields have described how professionals leverage voice, body, and other tools of *self*, and how they have otherwise conceptualized the expressive aspects of professionals' work. I then turn to look specifically at three separate bodies of educational research related to a facet of the expressive dimensions of teaching practice. By separating my review in such a way, my purpose is to maintain the integrity of each research strand while enabling conversation between them.

The three strands in education I review include: research about teachers' professional identities, roles, and performances; process-product and immediacy research related to specific expressive behaviors and demeanors; and research that describes examples of asset-based or cross-cultural teaching. The first two strands of research help to elucidate what *persona work* entails and its purposes in the classroom. The last strand does this as well, and also sheds light on specific considerations related to White teachers' *persona work* in cross-cultural instructional settings, which is the focus of this study.

Although each strand of research described in this review varies in its focus and approach, these accounts collectively contribute to my theoretical framework about *persona work* in important ways. I conclude this chapter, therefore, by looking across these accounts to show how they work together to enrich my theoretical framework and to guide my study design and analysis. This review of the theoretical and empirical perspectives is expansive. To provide some coherence to this review, Figure 2.1 offers a roadmap.
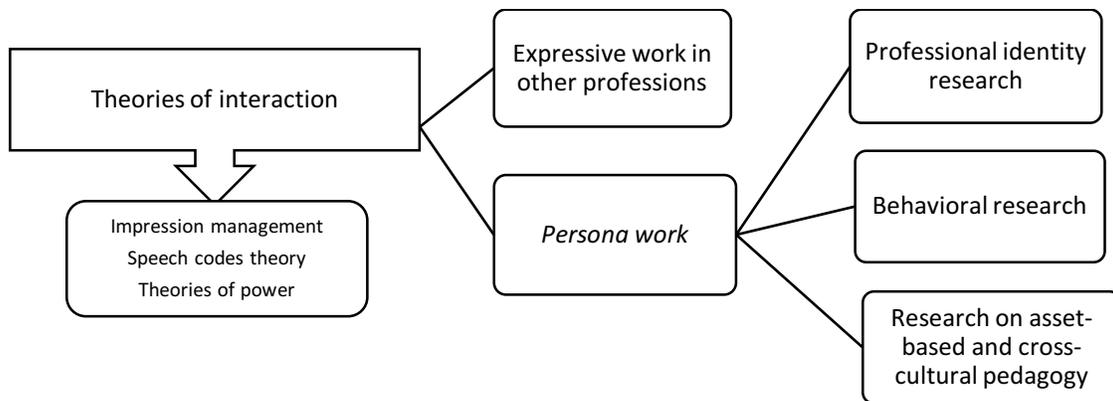
Figure 2.1. *Map of Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives Reviewed*

Theories of Interaction

To understand the role of teachers' *persona work*, it is important to draw on and situate it within broader scholarship on human interaction. Despite being a relatively new field, theories related to interaction are abundant and diverse. They pertain to many different aspects of interpersonal relationships and communication. They also emerge from diverse academic domains, such as intercultural studies, communication studies, anthropology, and psychology.

This dissertation foregrounds three types of interactional theory: impression management; speech code theory for intercultural communication; and theories related to power dynamics in interaction. Respectively, the theories show how individuals enact different roles during interaction, they explore the situated and culturally-specific nature of communication, and they foreground how interactions are influenced by identity, culture, and power. When taken together, these theories help explain different aspects of teachers' *persona* work. They also provide a useful backdrop for situating many of the conceptual and empirical studies reviewed later in the chapter.

Theory of Impression Management

Impression management was first developed Erving Goffman (1959) in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. The theory is rooted in broader scholarship on symbolic interactionism, which argues that meaning in interaction is socially derived and modified by individuals' interpretative processes (Latour, 2005). In his theory of impression management, Goffman adopted a dramaturgical metaphor. In interactions, he argued, individuals perform different social roles and use different interactional "props," depending on the nature of the interactional "setting" or "audience." He called these performances "presentations of self." Presentations of

self, Goffman argued, shift depending on the rules and constraints of each interactional context. When presentations of self are performed convincingly and align with the interactional context, they are more believable. Thus, they are more effective at influencing the audience to respond in desired ways. He called this "impression management."

Goffman also believed that presentations of self can collapse and fail. Failure in impression management might occur when individuals allow their audience to see through their presentations of self by revealing what Goffman called their "back stage." For example, individuals might let slip their feelings of anxiety or embarrassment, even while wanting to convey to interaction partners a sense of confidence and pride. Impression management can also fail when individuals' presentations of self are at odds with the interactional context. For example, they might mistakenly do or say something to communicate too much levity at a somber occasion. Failures like these in impression management might be fleeting, easily recouped through quick adjustment of individuals' expressive performance and resulting presentations of self. However, more egregious blunders can fundamentally undermine individuals' believability and diminish their influence. Goffman called this "losing face."

There are many lessons about teachers' *persona work* implicit in Goffman's theory of impression management. When engaging in *persona work*, teachers intentionally (albeit, sometimes, subconsciously) wield expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns to create different impressions on children. *Persona work* is, in other words, a kind of "presentation of self." Goffman argued that presentations of self must shift in response to interactional contexts and constraints to be effective. I likewise argue that teachers' *persona work* needs to change and adapt depending on what it is teachers hope to accomplish, where, and with whom. Further, just as presentations of self are ultimately meant to impact one's audience and further one's own interpersonal goals, I argue that teachers' *persona work* is intended to engage, motivate, convince, and otherwise influence *teachers'* "audience" (the children) within a defined dramaturgical "setting" (the classroom).

Conceivably, the more aligned teachers' *persona work* is to the interactional setting, the more successful and convincing it will be. In contrast, the less responsive teachers' *persona work* is to the context or the children, the more teachers may struggle to connect with and instruct their students. Even when teachers seek to enact *persona work* strategically and deliberately, their efforts might nonetheless be unsuccessful. Their work may still fail if it does not consider

children's potentially varying interpretations of teachers' expressive behaviors or consider the contextual constraints that could influence how *persona work* is seen and heard by students.

Further, I argue that, in moments when teachers are *not* consciously using expressive behaviors in instruction, their *persona work* will nevertheless still be visible to children. They will continue to enact "presentations of self," regardless of how purposeful they are when doing so, or how conscious. I also suggest that their unthinking, unconscious *persona work* is potentially even more likely to impact children in ways undesirable to the teacher. Goffman asserted that, especially in high-stakes social interactions, individuals are positioned to successfully influence others only when they wield interactional tools like body language, conversational style, and other aspects of what I call individuals' "expressive behaviors" with care and intention. Therefore, in contexts when they are unaware of their expressive displays, such as when teachers are unconscious of their *persona work*, they leave the *effects* of those expressive displays on interaction partners entirely to chance.

Teachers might be unsuccessful in their *persona work* in other ways as well. Given the unpredictable nature of schooling and the endemic uncertainties characterizing classroom life (Lampert et al., 2013), teachers might momentarily slip in their *persona work* and allow their "back stage" to shine through. They might, for example, inadvertently convey through their *persona work* thoughts or reactions that could detrimentally affect their interactional work. For example, they might expressively communicate feelings of dislike or boredom, or might fumble in their expressive presentation and thus imply through their *persona work* a lack of instructional skill.

Speech Codes Theory

Something Goffman's theory of impression management does not explain well is the relationship between individuals' "presentations of self" and the culturally situated nature of human interaction. For this, I turn to Gerry Philipsen's speech codes theory (Fitch & Philipsen, 2009; Philipsen, 1992, 1997). In the field of intercultural studies, there are many different theories of human interaction. I focus on speech codes theory not because of its prevalence in the literature, but because of its broad applicability to multiple interactional settings and its specific attention to the minute aspects of communication I refer to as verbal and nonverbal expressive behaviors.

Philipsen defined speech codes as "a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct" (1997, p. 126). Speech codes carry "traces of culture…[and] these traces will bear culturally distinctive meanings and significance" (Philipsen, 2015, p. 300). Although it employs the operative word "speech," speech codes theory in fact pertains to all manner of communicative contact, including speech, gesture, use of space, style of writing, and so on. Philipsen argued that speech codes embody the rules governing communication in any cultural setting, and have the power to signal *meaning* in communication. He suggested that, while communication acts are ubiquitous and ongoing whenever there also is human interaction, speech codes help to harness and define communication acts for interaction partners.

Specifically, speech codes flag what, discursively, is most important in communication in a specific cultural and interactional setting. Likewise, they signal what different communication performances might mean for different interactors. For example, depending on their dominant speech code, individuals are likely to notice different things about one another's expressions or gestures, and might draw from these communicative acts different ideas about their significance and implications. A smile or a frown, the raising of the eyebrows, or a sideways look all take on different meanings. Likewise, what counts as fighting, cajoling, asking, or lecturing in individuals' communication is also likely to vary culturally and even by interactional setting. The meaning of these constructs is, according to Philipsen, also defined by speech codes.

Although Philipsen sometimes used his theory of speech codes to conduct sweeping, large-scale analysis of language structures and national cultural systems, he also applied the theory to communication patterns and norms in smaller interactional settings and contexts. In fact, according to Philipsen, any location where there is a distinct "culture," no matter how small, likely has at least one speech code in operation. Commonly, there are *multiple* speech codes functioning simultaneously in a single setting, and sometimes even for single individuals. When individuals use the same speech code in a shared moment of interaction, they are likely to interpret the relative *meaning* and *importance* of different verbal and nonverbal cues similarly (e.g., the raising of an eyebrow, a specific gesture, etc.). In contrast, when they do not share the same speech code to generate meaning during an interactional exchange, problems may arise for interaction partners.

The theory of speech codes is useful for elaborating several considerations related to teachers' *persona work*. Given the increasingly diverse nature of classrooms, and the varied identities, experiences, and cultures teachers and children bring to school, individuals likely also bring with them a multiplicity of speech codes that they use to interpret one another's communicative acts. Depending on how these speech codes inform individuals' understanding of the expressive dimensions of interaction, there is always the potential for misinterpretation, confusion, or even conflict. I therefore use speech codes theory to suggest that it may be important to consider how children make sense of teachers' *persona work* and how teachers, in turn, interpret children's own expressive displays based on their speech codes.

Philipsen also argued that dominant speech codes in different interactional settings are shared and co-constructed by interactors. The extent to which this applies in classrooms, however, is unclear. Given the differential power relationship characterizing the interactions between teachers and children in most classrooms, it is likely that teachers' speech codes may be the primary arbiters of meaning and might thus embody preferred communication modes within the classroom space. Philipsen, however, indicated that speech codes theory is largely meant to be descriptive of individuals' verbal and nonverbal culturally-situated behaviors and how they interpret them. Thus, the theory does not address considerations related to power and privilege among interactors that might make some speech codes more dominant. To further explore these ideas, I turn to theories related power in classroom interaction.

Theories of Power

In interactions between teachers and children, teachers have traditionally made epistemological decisions about what ought to be known, and how, and how that knowledge ought to be communicated. "Power and the forms of knowledge legitimized in classrooms are inextricably linked" (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995, p. 451). When considering, therefore, how *persona work* operates and is interpreted by teachers and children in classroom, it is also important to consider the power dynamics that have historically influenced relationships between teachers and children in classrooms. It is likely, in other words, that teachers might legitimize certain forms of expressive communication and interpretation while delegitimizing others through their *persona work*.

The institution of schooling makes unique demands on children. Teachers typically specify how young people ought to participate, communicate, and engage with the teacher and

with one another, and even how they ought to physically conduct themselves within the classroom space. As McLaren (1993) argued, education is a cultural system in which teachers and classrooms inundate children daily with cultural symbols, rituals of interaction, and cultural codes. For instance, classrooms are characterized by specialized routines, specific ways of talking, distinctive systems of reward and punishment, and other features unique to the institution and purposes of schooling. These ritualistic features of classrooms and schools, McLaren suggested, are designed to subsume children's habits and preferences. They act as vehicles for widespread transmission of what are often teachers' own communication patterns, cultural norms and belief systems.

The norms and values transmitted by classrooms are commonly associated with the interactional practices, communication patterns, and expectations of one dominant group— (White) middle class teachers. Schools are additionally organized in a way that often positions some learners as deficient because, as McDermott and Varenne (1995) argue, categories of disability and deficiency are necessary, as a point of comparison, for categories of proficiency. Classrooms are therefore often structured in such a way that renders the interactional styles and behaviors of some children as more appropriate, and which labels the styles and behaviors of others as challenging or unacceptable (Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009). Specifically, deficit frameworks that promote singular, normative views of interaction and behavior have disproportionally labeled children from historically marginalized groups as "deficient" or "different."

In human interaction, "what people do in interaction with each other is complex, ambiguous, and indeterminate, and it often involves issues of social identity, power relations, and broad and social processes" (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2004, p. xvii). How *persona work* is used and interpreted in the classroom is likewise caught up in considerations related to power, identity, and context. In exploring the expressive dimensions of interactional work in the classroom, therefore, theories of power in interaction highlight the need for this study to consider which epistemological and communicative practices are acknowledged and legitimized through teachers' *persona work*, and which are silenced or rejected.

Looking Across Theories

This chapter began by considering three types of interactional theory that illuminated different considerations about teachers' *persona work*. The theories related to impression

management, speech codes, and the power dynamics implicit in classroom interactions. I used these theories to postulate several things about how *persona work* functions and what it entails.

First, I used Goffman's theory of impression management to argue that, when wielded purposefully and strategically, teachers' expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns are more likely to impact and influence children. I also speculated that, regardless of how purposeful it is, teachers' *persona work* needs to be attentive and responsive to context and audience to be effective. I then leveraged Philipsen's speech codes theory to consider the additional impact of culture and identity on interaction. I suggested that the expressive dimensions of teachers' (and children's) *persona work* is informed by culture and experience. I also argued for the likelihood that multiple interpretations of *persona work* might function simultaneously in the same interactional space, which could create conflict. Last, I showed how power mediates all interaction, including interactions between teachers and children. I described patterns in how, historically, teachers determined what counts as legitimate knowledge and discourse in classrooms. I then suggested this may also be true in terms of how *persona work* is used and legitimized in classrooms.

I now turn to an exploration of empirical research and other theoretical perspectives on the expressive dimensions of teaching and other professions. Many of the accounts I review take up facets of the theories that began this chapter, while some offer additional, related perspectives that are helpful for conceptualizing *persona work* in teaching. I first consider how the construct of *persona work* has been conceptualized and how it has been taught in other professions. Next, I turn to the literature in education to explore three different strands of research that relate to aspects of *persona work*. I end with a re-articulation and expansion of my theoretical framework for *persona work* based on the theories and findings presented in this chapter.

Expressive Work in Other Professions

Knowing how to strategically, consciously manage *persona work* appears to be a critical skill in many professional settings. Expressive work seems especially central in "professions of human improvement" (Cohen, 2011) such as teaching, social work, the clergy, or psychotherapy, where "workers seek to improve skills, deepen insights, broaden understanding, cope with feelings, take another's point of view, and increase honesty" (Cohen, 2011, p. 5). Grossman, Compton and colleagues (Grossman et al., 2009) described such professions as entailing

"relational work." How relational professionals behave and communicate when interfacing with clientele, they argue, can help them influence and motivate patients, students, or parishioners.

Therapists often need to adopt an outward appearance of empathy in order to help patients feel seen, heard, and acknowledged (Wachtel, 1993). Doing so requires that they speak, move, and otherwise communicate in ways that would be peculiar in other contexts, such as by talking only in questions, or by incorporating long, palpable silences in the middle of exchanges with patients (Wachtel, 1993). Therapists also commonly exaggerate or mask their facial expressions to avoid giving away their opinions and feelings during therapeutic sessions. They cannot simply "be themselves" by, for example, spontaneously communicating judgment or boredom, as to do so would jeopardize their relational aims and alienate patients (Thoits, 1996). Instead, the ways therapists act out expressive aspects of *self* is often strategic, and can change depending on the identities and needs of clientele.

Even in professions where the goal is not to "improve" (Cohen, 2011) others, but merely to influence them, professionals' expressive work plays a critical role. For example, Vaccaro, Schrock and McCabe (2011) described the centrality of expressive demeanors among Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighters, who learn to speak, gesture, and otherwise enact what I call *persona work* in the ring in ways meant to intimidate opponents and embody assertive masculinity. The authors described how otherwise mild-mannered MMA fighters might adopt a glowering expression, aggressive body language, or loud, domineering styles of talk that differ from their normal ways of behaving or communicating (Vaccaro, Schrock, & McCabe, 2011). By doing so, they convey their dominance and confidence in the ring.

Spradley and Mann (2008) described how cocktail waitresses also speak, move, and use expressive work in ways that, although stylistically very different from the expressive behaviors of MMA fighters, are also strategic and designed to maximize waitresses' professional goals. For example, the waitresses in Spradley and Mann's study adopted similar styles of dress, engaged in ritualistic flirting and joking behaviors with customers, and always remembered to smile—even when they did not feel like doing so. Their expressive work affirmed customers and engaged them, and kept customers wanting to return for another drink or meal. In fact, Spradley and Mann described how many customers quickly grew to expect certain styles of discourse and behavior from their waitresses. Clients would sometimes complain to the manager and label

waitresses "rude" or "incompetent" when they acted in a way that, far from rude, merely ran counter to the expressive performances to which customers were accustomed.

Fields like social work, medicine, the clergy, physical therapy, and even the aviation industry have begun the work of decomposing what productive categories of expressive behaviors might entail in different professional contexts. Many of these professions also provide novices with explicit opportunities to learn and rehearse expressive work during professional training (Cahill, 1999; Foster, 2006; Helmreich, 2000; Hochschild, 2003; Jordan, 1989; Rose, 1999; Wachtel, 1993). For example, in his study of novice clergy, Foster (2006) described extensive rehearsals they undergo as part of their training. These novices practice enacting the physical rituals of the liturgy, for example, and experiment with different ways of deploying nonverbal behaviors like gesture and gaze in public rehearsals.

In contrast, educational research has no clear articulation of the role of teachers' expressive work in broader teaching practice and no shared idea about what *persona work* should entail. Few research strands have even considered the connection between teachers' expressive work, their relationships with children, or their instructional efficacy. Further, in comparison to other relational professions, the training provided to teachers pertaining to the expressive facets of their work has been virtually nonexistent in traditional teacher education programs, or has been offered only idiosyncratically and informally by novices' mentor teachers in student teaching placements.

Investigating Facets of Teachers' *Persona Work* in Studies of Teaching

In the literature in education and beyond, research does not typically look at teachers' expressive behaviors, styles, and patterns holistically or simultaneously. However, many researchers have touched on one or more aspects of what I consider teachers' *persona work*, and these accounts are therefore helpful for further developing the ideas in this study. In the sections that follow, I review three main bodies of literature in the research on teaching: (a) studies that describe teachers' professional identity and role; (b) studies that describe singular verbal or nonverbal expressive behaviors teachers might enact in the classroom; and (c) studies that describe asset-based pedagogies and teachers' interactions with children in cross-cultural contexts. I follow this review by considering how these diverse studies, when taken together, contribute to my broader theoretical framework on *persona work*.

Professional Identity and Performance in the Classroom

"Identity" has become an expansive and amorphous construct in the educational literature (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Izadinia, 2013), entailing everything from teachers' self-concepts, orientations, and reflective processes (Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010) to their socialization into larger professional contexts (Buchmann, 1986; Ibarra, 1999; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008) and the "manner" teachers project in the classroom due to their ethical, moral, and personal orientations (Fenstermacher, 2001; Richardson & Fallona, 2001; Richardson & Fenstermacher, 2001). Much of this research on identity in teaching stems from the cognitive paradigm (Beijaard et al., 2004), and therefore principally investigates and theorizes about teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and decision-making. However, one sub-category of research within this strand specifically considers the relationship between teachers' professional identity or role and their teaching *practice*, such as by relating teachers' professional identity to their interactional choices (e.g., Davis, 2012; Parini, 2005; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008). Another category of identity research considers how teachers' identities in the classroom are like those of "performers" (e.g., McLaren, 1993; Pineau, 1994; Prendergast, 2008). These accounts foreground teachers' use of aspects of *self* like voice and body language as central in teachers' "performances" with children. These sub-strands of identity research are described below.

One aspect of educational research on professional identity considers ways teachers' understandings of professional and personal identity are tied to different stylistic teaching approaches, or what I call a teacher's "expressive demeanor" (Davis, 2012; Fenstermacher & Soltis, 2004; O'Connor, 2008; Parini, 2005; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Volkmann and Anderson (1998), for instance, illustrated the difficulty one novice science teacher had reconciling her personal desire to be seen as "caring" by her students and her desire to assume the professional appearance of being "in control." This tension, the authors argued, made it difficult for her to know "how to be" in the classroom when interacting with children.

In another example, Ronfeldt and Grossman (2008) explored how pre-service teachers feared adopting professional identities that required them to act in ways that felt expressively uncomfortable, such as by being "authoritative." Instead, the pre-service teachers expressed a desire to take on professional identities they felt were more aligned with their personal orientations and expressive styles, such as by aspiring to be "charismatic" or "nurturing."

Within this aspect of identity research, there are in fact several accounts that use the term "persona." Most notably, Davis (2012) and Parini (2005) employed the term "persona" to signify the stylistic approaches adopted by the teacher when engaging with children. These authors argued that teachers should choose among a discrete list of possible "personas," such as by acting authoritative, funny, engaging, and so on, to try out in the classroom. For Parini, this was a matter of finding the right stylistic "fit" based on individuals' personal identity and preferred communication style. Davis, in contrast, argued that teachers could adopt and then drop different personas, depending on what it was they wanted to accomplish with children. For example, teachers might be stern one day, sweet the next, and so on.

Both these authors believed that these "personas" were informed by teachers' personal dispositions and orientations, and that teachers' relative success with children depended on the professional appropriateness and fit of their "personas" inside the larger instructional setting. Neither David nor Parini, however, made explicit links between what they called "personas" and teachers' specific expressive behaviors and patterns. Rather, both authors defined the term broadly, as a static label that described *all* teacher's communication work, behavior, and professional identity.

A very different sub-category of research on professional identity situates the professional roles teachers adopt in the classroom within the broader disciplinary study of performance. This strand of research is not to be confused with a line of inquiry in education that has compared teachers to actors, and which has argued that teachers merely must learn to enact a "song and dance" in the classroom by performing in a set handful of ways. As Pineau (1994) argued, "Not only does this perspective rest on an impoverished sense of performance, it likewise diminishes the complexity of educational interactions. To equate instructional communication with presentational style grossly devalues the intellectual work of teaching" (p. 7). Rather, Pineau and others (Alexander, 2005; Garoian, 1999; Harris, 1998; McLaren, 1993; Sarason, 1999; Sawyer, 2004) asserted that the discipline of performance studies can illuminate critical aspects of teaching work without being reductionist. For example, performance studies can cast light on specific aspects of teachers' *persona work*, or what Pineau calls teachers' "artistry," while also providing lessons about how teachers might enact performances in ways that are complex, layered, responsive, and situated.

For Pineau, for example, performance studies can offer a "new paradigm for conceptualizing educational culture, the dynamics of instructional communication, and methods of teacher training" (1984, p. 5). The question, she argued, is not whether teaching is or is not performance, but whether research in performance studies is helpful for elaborating critical aspects of teaching work. She felt it was, specifically through the diverse lenses of interaction performance studies offers related to *aesthetic, innovative, subversive, processual,* and *critical* work. Taken together, these aspects of performance can help orient teachers' attention and professional identities *outward*, towards students, rather than inward. Teachers' performances can be empowering for learners, reflect real-life interactional complexity, and actively embrace what performance studies called "the other." Such work entailed, for Pineau, the "behavioral specificity demanded by performance, the emphasis on the slightest nuances of voice or gesture," or what she called the "aesthetic" dimensions of teaching.

In the book *Teaching as Performance Art*, Sarason (1999) also adopted the metaphor of "performance" to describe the work of teaching and teachers' professional identities. She said teachers' professional work is informed by their knowledge of the subject matter, their ability to build and sustain relationships with students, and their capacity to make their care *visible* to students through their communication and expressive approach. "A teacher not only has to make the creative effort to identity with how the student of that age or grade is likely to think but also to make his or her understanding believable and reassuring [to the student]" (Sarason, 1999, p. 94). For Sarason, performance in teaching was about making invisible emotions and attitudes, such as care or regard, discernible to children. Sarason explicitly argued that teachers' tools of *self*—what I call their expressive behaviors—are resources for influencing and coordinating what and how students engage with and respond to content.

Taken together, many of these theorists believed that viewing the domain of teaching practice through a lens of performance studies could illuminate critical questions about teaching and central aspects of teaching practice. Across this subsidiary body of research is a shared idea that teachers' performances emerge from personal identity and allow teachers to embody distinct professional roles related to interactional approach and style, such as that of improviser, entertainer, critic, collaborator, cultural mediator, and disruptor (Prendergast, 2008).

Relationship to *persona work* and discussion. In general, accounts related to teachers' professional identity highlight several important considerations about teachers' *persona work*.

First, they show the dynamic interplay between teachers' interactional and instructional approaches and their professional identities on one hand, and their personal experiences, orientations, and self-concepts on the other. For example, some research describes how teachers' personal stylistic approaches (e.g., friendly, smiling) might be at odds with the expressive demeanor they believe necessary for their teaching work. Such accounts suggest that teachers' *persona work* might be informed by their professional identities, as well as their personal orientations, experiences, and dispositions. I draw on these studies to argue that teachers' personal identities might sometimes get in the way of their *persona work,* especially in cases when the latter requires them to behave in ways that are expressively different than they might in other contexts.

Second, at least some of these accounts show the mutable nature of teachers' professional and personal identities. They emphasize how teachers' attitudes and behaviors in the classroom need not be fixed, but rather can be fluid and adaptive, continually shaped by context, students, instructional variables, and professional standards. Pineau and Sarason specifically extended this argument to include what I am calling teachers' *persona work*. They asserted that not only are teachers' professional identities responsive and adaptive, but also that identities are "performed" through teachers' expressive behaviors. Their accounts support my argument that teachers' *persona work* is the vehicle through which teachers can initiate and maintain productive interactions in the classroom between themselves, their students, and the subject matter. They also underscore my assertion that teachers' *persona work* likely needs to be flexible and fluid, and that it should change depending on what teachers want to accomplish, in what setting, and with whom.

Across the research on professional identity, a major limitation is the lack of sufficient examples for how teachers' identities and beliefs connect with their instructional and relational practice. Many of these studies are conceptual, and thus do not closely describe teachers' *persona work*. They also lack specificity about subject matter, the identities and experiences of teachers and children, and classroom contexts. Even identity research that is grounded in empirical research does not typically draw on observational data of teaching practice. Rather, it commonly relies on teachers' recollections and beliefs.

A further limitation of some research on professional identity is an assumed correlation between teachers' beliefs, orientations, and identities and what they instrumentally *do* in the

classroom. Such a relationship should not necessarily be taken for granted. Rather, what teachers' role orientations (e.g., "being nice," "being fair") or professional identities look like or entail in terms of their unique *persona work* will likely vary substantially depending on teachers' personal identity, style, and experience. Additionally, as I argued in Chapter 1, individuals often have limited awareness of how they behave expressively or how their expressive behaviors and styles are interpreted by others. Therefore, it might also be true that teachers' assumptions about how children experience and interpret their manifestations of professional identity are, in fact, inaccurate.

Behaviorist Research Related to *Persona Work*

A very different strand of research in education explores teachers' isolated verbal and nonverbal communicative behaviors in the classroom and their effects on children. This research entails two congruent lines of research stemming from the behaviorist research paradigm: process-product and immediacy research. These lines of inquiry are the only coherent bodies of educational research that focus, at least in part, on aspects of teachers' practice I call their *persona work*, including the impact of *persona work* on children. In the following section, I describe the major findings of each of these congruent lines of research related to the ideas in this dissertation. I then briefly consider these bodies of research together in terms of their shared limitations and contributions to my theoretical framework.

Process-product. Process-product research in education first emerged in the 1960s from the field of behavioral psychology. Its goal was to measure the relationship between some teaching input, or "process," and student learning, or the "product." Prior to the introduction of this paradigm, in fact, few accounts in educational research considered the nature and efficacy of discrete, decomposed aspects of teaching practice. Further, with the advent of process-product research came one of the first efforts to understand teaching in terms of students' response and achievement (Gage & Needels, 1989).

Process-product research originally focused on teachers' instructional activities, such as the relative time teachers allotted for whole class and small group work. However, a related line of research grew out of the process-product paradigm that specifically examined teachers' nonverbal behaviors. A handful of researchers from this sub-strand of process-product research argued that, because teachers are continually communicating, their nonverbal behaviors are thus omnipresent. It is therefore critical, they asserted, for teachers to become aware of these

behaviors when engaging with children (Galloway, 1968; Galloway, 1970; Koch, 1971; Ostler & Kranz, 1976).

Process-product studies of teachers' nonverbal behaviors and their effects on children address a number of aspects of what I term *persona work*. They include teachers' use of classroom space and proximity to children, their style of movement and gesture, their posture and expression, and their gaze. In terms of teachers' physical patterns within the larger classroom, for example, Rivlin and Rothenberg (1975) found that teachers in two different elementary schools failed to use all the classroom space when circulating throughout the classroom, and that their movement patterns were predictable. They argued that children would show higher levels of achievement and engagement if teachers made use of more classroom space. In another study, Sherman (1973) described the higher achievement that resulted among fourth graders when their teacher stood within one foot of students, rather than further away.

In terms of teachers' gestures, posture, facial expression, and gaze, several researchers in this sub-category of process-product research claimed that children are adept at "reading" teachers' expressions, and furthermore, that students are more engaged and attentive when teachers make eye contact (e.g., Hodge, 1971). The use of gesture, smiling, and close proximity in the classroom has also been associated with positive responses and "liking" from children and with higher levels of student engagement (Kleinfeld, 1973).

Neill (1989) conducted a series of studies that found that children in elementary and middle schools paid more attention to bodily cues when decoding teachers' nonverbal behaviors, whereas high school students were more attuned to teachers' expressions. Additionally, Neill asserted that high schoolers were more likely to interpret teachers' "friendly" nonverbal behaviors, such as smiling, as examples of weakness. In contrast, Schuster (1971) described how teachers were often unaware of the meaning communicated through *children's* expression or gaze, and were often unable to identify subtle differences across children's expressions. Schuster's was one of the only studies to consider teachers' interpretations of children's expressive behaviors.

Process-product research also investigated aspects of what I call teachers' "expressive demeanor," such as their apparent humor or displays of enthusiasm. For example, in his meta-review, Rosenshine (1970) summarized process-product research that showed a strong correlation between teachers' animated and enthusiastic behaviors in the classroom and students'

achievement. He said enthusiastic teaching demeanors caused children to pay attention to the teacher and the content, and modeled and reinforced what children themselves should think about and how they should engage in the lesson. In another example, van Tartwijk and colleagues (van Tartwijk, Brekelmans, Wubbels, Fisher, & Fraser, 1998) showed that children perceived teachers as "stricter" and more "in control" when they spoke clearly and crisply, stood further from children, and adopted an upright posture and firm expression. However, as Harris (1998) argued in her review of literature on teaching effectiveness, process-product research was less successful at establishing a link between what she termed different teaching "styles" and instructional outcomes due to "the sheer diversity of teaching situations and contexts" (p. 176).

Although much of the process-product research directly describes aspects of what I call teachers' *persona work* and its effects on children, its results should be interpreted with caution. Because this research tried to standardize its findings, it typically sought congruity across four variables: teacher characteristics (e.g., age, gender), context (e.g., subject matter, grade level), process (teacher behavior and student behavior), and product (e.g., achievement measures). Typically, this line of research did not consider other variables that are also critical for influencing and mediating instruction. For example, Berliner (1989) argued that process-product research does not account for time, but rather assumes a causal connection between teaching and learning—even when months pass before achievement measures are given. In addition, Berliner (1989) and Shulman (1987) both raised questions about the mediating effects of subject matter on process-product correlations.

Further, much process-product research only considers stock differences in terms of categories of identity and experience for teachers and children (e.g., high and low SES in children, years teachers were in the classroom, etc.). When arguing for the relative "effectiveness" of different teaching moves, this research tends to take the *average* of children's behaviors across multiple children, rather than considering differences in children's responses and what they might mean. While the empirical studies in the process-product line of research offer a useful close-up view of discrete teaching practices, they fail to *recompose* teaching practice by considering how these behaviors function in tandem. Such studies do not explore critical and potentially interceding factors related to identity, context, and power on the process-product relationship. Nevertheless, the process-product research is rare in educational research for bringing attention to aspects of what I call teachers' *persona work*, and thus is quite useful.

Immediacy. Mehrabian (1969) defined immediacy behaviors as communication moves that "enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another" (p. 302). The concept of immediacy refers to human interactions in which individuals are drawn toward others they like and admire and avoid those they dislike or consider unskilled or ineffective. Individuals can, according to Mehrabian (1971), generate immediacy through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors, or what I call their *persona work*. Data for immediacy research typically draws on large-scale survey data of students from university classrooms. Empirical accounts within this line of behavioral research have consistently shown high correlations between professors' immediacy behaviors and student learning, motivation, attendance, and participation.

Specifically, researchers have associated immediacy with multiple nonverbal behaviors, including gesture, eye contact, smiling, standing relaxed but upright, teaching from different parts of the room, and proximity to students. It also includes varying vocal intonation and incorporating silences into talk, as well as facing students rather than the board. For example, Hesler (1972) showed that undergraduates were more likely to like their teachers, participate, and feel engaged when teachers were in close proximity to them. Breed (1971) found that little or no eye contact between teachers and students typically resulted in students' dislike and disengagement. Titsworth and colleagues (Titsworth, McKenna, Mazer, & Quinlan, 2013) showed how teachers used nonverbal immediacy behaviors to help students feel emotionally connected. Nonverbal immediacy cues were so significant for college students, in fact, that Ambady and Rosenthal (1993) and Babad, Avni-Babad, and Rosenthal (2003) found that students made predictions about how much they would enjoy the teacher and the class based on only ten seconds of exposure to teachers' verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Interestingly, in these studies, students' attitudes remained unchanged the entire semester.

Other studies show positive correlations between verbal immediacy behaviors and student learning and engagement. Significant verbal immediacy behaviors include calling students by name, self-disclosure, using inclusive terms like "we" and "us" when referring to the class, incorporating humor, and eliciting students' feelings, thoughts, and ideas. For example, some studies showed that students felt teachers' inclusion of personal details during instruction helped clarify the content and made their instruction more engaging (Cayanus, Martin, & Goodboy, 2009; Downs, Javidi, & Nussbaum, 1988; Wambach & Brothen, 1997). Gorham (1988) asserted that especially teachers' humor and willingness to converse with individual

students were positively associated with students' learning. Goodboy, Weber, and Bolkan (2009) described how higher levels of verbal immediacy behaviors in teachers not only led to an increase in student learning and engagement, but also led students to recall more information during exams.

Some researchers specifically compared teachers' immediacy behaviors and student learning and engagement across different racial and cultural groups of students (Collier & Powell, 1990; McCroskey, Fayer, Richmond, Sallinen, & Barraclough, 1996; Powell & Harville, 1990; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Findings from these studies show positive correlation between immediacy behaviors and student outcomes. However, several studies also highlighted differential effects across different racial groups. For example, Powell and Harville (1990) showed that verbal immediacy appeared to have no significant effect on the learning and engagement of Asian American students. Sanders and Wiseman (1990) found that teachers' proximity was only significant for White students, while moving around the classroom was important only for Hispanic students. They also asserted that teachers' incorporation of personal examples was influential primarily on Hispanic and Black students, and that gesturing was significant mainly for White and Asian students. However, these studies should be read with caution, given their implicit, essentialist assumptions of homogeneity within different racial categories.

In general, like the process-product research, immediacy research has some major methodological limitations. Most obviously, perhaps, is that it has been primarily conducted within large university lecture classrooms, rather than in primary or secondary schools, which makes it less applicable to my own research. Further, this line of research typically does not rely on observational data. Rather, findings are derived from self-reported student survey data. Such research calls into question what each of these immediacy behaviors looks like in practice, how these behaviors vary, their frequency, and how they intersect with teachers' instructional and relational work. Like process-product research, immediacy studies also similarly assume a direct causal relationship between teachers' immediacy behaviors and student outcomes without also considering the role of other potentially mediating effects. Finally, immediacy research rarely considers context or the identity of teachers and students. When it does, such as in the small handful of examples provided above, it tends to so reductively by drawing largely essentialist conclusions about race.

Relationship to *persona work* and discussion. Despite their limitations, the congruent lines of behavioral research in education related to process-product studies and teacher immediacy contribute to my theorization about teachers' *persona work* in several ways. First, these studies are important because they emphasize teachers' verbal and nonverbal expressive behaviors. This is critical, given that much of the existing educational research pays little attention to teachers' *persona work* and its role in teachers' effectiveness and their relationships with children.

Second, both immediacy and process-product research focused on nonverbal and verbal expressive behaviors derived from a well-developed line of research in psychology and communication studies. Said line of research looked specifically at isolated communication moves and interpersonal styles of engagement and their effects on human interaction (e.g., Argyle, 1975; Ekman, 1993; Kleinke, 1986; Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013). In my own study, I consider many of the same verbal and nonverbal behaviors when articulating and analyzing teachers' *persona work*. Specifically, I explore the role of nonverbal behaviors such as gaze, movement, gesture, expression, use of silence, proximity, and posture in teachers' practice. I also attend to many of the verbal behaviors alluded to in this body of research, such as teachers' questioning, facilitation of student participation in class, humor, self-disclosure, use of inclusive pronouns, intonation and vocal rhythm, and praise.

While process-product and immediacy research is useful for helping me to articulate the components of teachers' *persona work*, it is also prescriptive and limited in scope. In addition to the critiques cited above, such behavioral research does not consider how different verbal and nonverbal expressive behaviors function in conjunction with one another, or how they are situated within teachers' larger instructional and relational purposes. Rather, these accounts typically view teachers' communicative acts in isolation both from one another and from the larger instructional context. As immediacy researcher Nussbaum (1983) argued, in research like this, "teachers are viewed as the source and students as the receivers, and no attempt is made to account for mutual influence" (p. 172). This means that these strands of research rarely consider the reciprocal effects of students' perceptions and responses on teachers' expressive behaviors. Rather, teachers' expressive acts are treated by these researchers as static, unresponsive to and largely unaffected by children or context.

Asset-Based and Cross-Cultural Teaching

Much of the literature I review in this section relates specifically to my own theorization around the construct of teachers' *persona work* and my study design. In this dissertation, I purposefully consider the practice of White teachers with diverse groups of children, and not solely with children of color. I speculated that creating such an analytic space might unearth differential expressive behaviors and patterns in teachers' interactions with different individuals and groups of students. At the same time, I pay special attention to the White teachers' expressive interactions with children of color, and with Black students especially, given the history of inequity that has characterized these interpersonal relationships in the classroom. In doing so, I am not assuming the linguistic and social practices of the members of each racial or cultural group are homogenous. I use race as an analytic lens because of the continued existence of racism in schools, and because teachers' use of *persona work* and how children experience it is likely shaped by socially defined categories of race and ethnicity.

This section specifically explores ways researchers have shown teachers to be differentially successful at connecting with and instructing different groups of children through their communication and expressive behaviors. It looks especially at the interactional and communicative practices of White teachers when engaging with children of color, and relates these ideas to the broader construct of teachers' *persona work* in the classroom. Specifically, it describes the difficulties White teachers often have in successfully connecting with and instructing children who are racially different from them in ways that are equitable and positive. It also looks at some of the successes of White teachers specifically within cross-cultural settings, and it considers asset-based pedagogies that are useful in cross-cultural contexts and that also relate to the expressive dimensions of teachers' work.

Aspects of identity related to race and culture can play a critical role of mediating relationships, especially those characterized by cross-cultural interaction. White teachers' lack of success in cross-cultural contexts is, in fact, a dominant narrative in educational research. For example, because many White teachers grew up and went to school in racially segregated, majority White communities, many had little contact with individuals with cultural and communication practices different from their own (Ford & Sassi, 2014; Gay & Howard, 2000). Yet, given their charge to instruct all children, teachers' narrow experience can create relational difficulties in the classroom.

Cross-cultural instructional contexts can lead to misunderstandings, for instance, around teacher and children's behavior and language (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 2009), and can thus create problems of enactment and interpretation in what I call teachers' *persona work*. This is especially true in cases where children's communication patterns at home and in their communities and the styles of communication and interaction enforced by the teacher and the school are starkly different (Delpit, 2006; Godley & Escher, 2012; Greenbaum & Greenbaum, 1983; Heath, 1983). For example, Wolcott (1974) described how his own assumptions about culture and language as a White teacher of Kwakiutl Indian students led to miscommunication and antagonism with his students. He was ignorant, he said, of students' very different expressive and interactional practices and thus of how they were interpreting his own communicative acts, and he did not see children's experiences and language as an instructional resource.

In the past few decades, educational research has rapidly grown a body of knowledge related to synchronizing teachers' orientations, dispositions, and practices to those of the children they instruct. For instance, asset-based frameworks like culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014), or cultural modeling (Lee, 2007) all represent different pedagogical models that are responsive to and inclusive of children's culture and communication practices. Specifically, such models outline ways teachers can leverage the resources and experiences of children of color and view them as assets that can help to inform and reshape relationships in the classroom and broaden epistemological conceptions about different ways of knowing or being in the classroom.

For example, Ladson-Billings' "culturally relevant pedagogy" (Ladson-Billings, 2009) comprises three components: advancing children's cultural competence, enabling their academic success, and inspiring in them sociopolitical consciousness to solve real-world problems. It was designed as a model for teaching Black children especially in ways that are both rigorous and empowering and that leverage their language and experiences as strengths. In another example, through their model of "culturally sustaining pedagogy," an adaption of Ladson-Billings's model, Paris and Alim (2014) argued that instructional spaces should be repositioned to normalize the learning and cultural practices of marginalized children. Implicit in such asset-based models is the idea that teachers' instructional work and interactional approach should adapt to and affirm children—and this, I argue, includes teachers' *persona work*.

Some empirical accounts related to the implementation of such asset-based pedagogies have addressed aspects of teachers' *persona work* head on by looking specifically at teachers' communication and relational practices with Black and Brown children. In investigations of how teachers might successfully nurture caring relationships with children of color, for example, some researchers have advocated that teachers adopt specific communicative behaviors and relational stances in their *persona work* (Bondy, Ross, Hambacher, & Acosta, 2013; Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2007; Brown, 2003; Cholewa, Amatea, West-Olatunji, & Wright, 2012; Ford & Sassi, 2014; Monroe & Obidah, 2004; Ross, Bondy, & Hambacher, 2008; Ware, 2006). When describing what they and others called a "warm demander" approach, for instance, Bondy and colleagues (2007) suggested teachers adopt a direct discourse style, employ colloquial and familiar expressions, and use humor and terms of endearment to hold children's attention and build relationships with them.

In their study investigating the pedagogical approach of a successful teacher of Black children, Cholewa and colleagues (Cholewa et al., 2012) also foregrounded what I would argue are the expressive aspects of a teacher's practice. The authors described how one teacher, Ms. M., communicated clearly and firmly but was also playful and humorous in her dealings with children. Ms. M., who was herself African-American, also commonly deployed gesture in the classroom, frequently circulated about the room, and made eye contact with children. The researchers argued that Ms. M. was highly skilled at connecting with her students. They also asserted that most of her connections emerged from her *academic* interactions, rather than through extraneous personal exchanges with children. She was transparent with children about her instructional decisions, interacted with them in instructionally equitable ways, and adopted an engaging expressive approach that helped her capture and maintain children's attention and interest.

Many of the empirical studies related to implementing asset-based pedagogies with children of color describe the relationships between Black teachers and Black children. However, a small handful of studies (e.g., Bondy et al., 2007; Boucher, 2016; Cooper, 2003) feature successful White teachers and their relationship with children of color, and similarly include illustrations related to what I call teachers' *persona work*. Cooper (2003), for example, showed how a handful of "expert" White teachers of children of color employed firm, direct tones when engaging with students. Cooper said these teachers were "unapologetic about their in-charge

attitude" (p. 421). She described how they were business-like in their authority, and that, "in all instances, the teachers almost immediately returned to a friendlier tone of voice and demeanor and the ongoing business of the classroom" (p. 422) after correcting children. Cooper also showed how these teachers adopted a "mothering" (p. 423), caring approach stance with children, consistent with what is described in the warm demander literature. They used inclusive, familiar terms, such as by calling students "my kids." They praised students, and defended them in front of other teachers. In general, Cooper said the White teachers in her study enacted nearly all the pedagogical moves found in the literature on successful Black teachers of Black children, and did so in ways that were equitable. The main exception, she said, was the White teachers' lack of engagement with children in explicit conversations about race.

Boucher (2016) conducted a case study that highlighted the positive relationships one White teacher, Mark Johnson, had with the Black children in his classroom. Boucher showed how Mark provided children with individualized attention, continually gave them opportunities to voice their ideas, and was careful to learn about each child in his class. He built what Boucher termed relationships of "solidarity" with his students, which were characterized by a deep regard for children and a focus on children's strengths and the strengths of their families and communities. While not explicitly mentioning what I call "*persona work*" in his account, Boucher alluded to some verbal aspects of Mark's expressive behaviors. He described, for example, ways Mark used personal disclosure and empowering language to connect with his students. Broadly speaking, Boucher argued that Mark's solidarity relationships with children grew from four factors: (1) his willingness to associate with children different from him; (2) his identification of the need for solidarity, despite his position of privilege; (3) his interrogation of his own Whiteness and what it meant for his relationships with his students; and (4) his ongoing maintenance of his solidarity relationships through his involvement with children and their families in the classroom, the school, and the larger community.

Despite these examples of successful White teachers in cross-cultural settings, in general the challenges facing children of color—and especially Black males—in many U.S. schools that are dominated by White teachers are well documented and very real (Ferguson, 2001; Howard, 2013; Monroe, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Obidah (as cited in Obidah & Teel, 2001), for example, challenged the effectiveness of White teachers among historically marginalized children. He argued that many preservice White teachers in his

study were socialized into deficit thinking patterns about their Black students. Because most of these teachers did not believe children of color were even capable of learning, Obidah questioned whether they would be successful in their attempts to actually facilitate that learning in the classroom.

In another example, Hyland (2005) worried about the beliefs and orientations of one White teacher in her ethnographic study. She described how this teacher practiced *aspects* of culturally responsive pedagogy in her classrooms by imitating some specific discursive patterns of her students, but lacked a deep understanding of her students' identities or of larger issues related to social inequality and injustice. Hyland therefore felt the teacher risked perpetuating racial inequities in her classroom through her thoughtless, albeit well-meaning, appropriation of students' communicative patterns in her own talk.

In the research on teaching, there is a general sense that many White teachers perpetuate injustices in the classroom when engaging in cross-cultural work with children of color. Gregory and Weinstein (2008) believed that interactions between White teachers and Black students created a "discipline" gap in schools that can lead to lower academic achievement and disproportionate suspensions, especially among African American boys. Rong (1996) showed that White female teachers viewed White male students more positively than Black male students, whereas children's race did not appear to be a factor in Black female teachers' perceptions of students. McKown and Weinstein (2008) described how White teachers' preferences for White and Asian students over children who were Black and Latino contributed to academic disparities across those racial groups. In general, given that the teaching force remains largely White, middle class, and female, many researchers believe that part of children's continued marginalization might be explained by inequities in some (White) teachers' instructional practice and, I argue, might also be perpetuated by patterns of privilege and injustice communicated through their *persona work*.

Relationship to *persona work* and discussion. In contrast to the other categories of research, the accounts related to teachers' asset-based or cross-cultural practice are typically grounded in empirical data and analysis, and they often rely on classroom observation. They also explicitly account for mediating factors of context, identity, and power when describing teachers' relational work with children. Last, many of these accounts provide concrete examples of what I

am calling expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns, and have associated these expressive examples with successful pedagogies of teachers of children of color.

These studies show that teachers have met with success, especially among Black students, by deploying direct and firm language, using warm and nurturing discursive styles, and engaging in equitable patterns when interacting with different children. Further, they show how such expressive behaviors are interwoven with other aspects of teachers' practice and have been informed by teachers' dispositions and orientations to students. These accounts distinguish themselves from other strands of research for two reasons: they illuminate the complex and situated nature of teachers' *persona work* in classrooms, and they also provide close, practice-based examples of *persona work*.

Unsurprisingly, some of this research has shown that White teachers are more successful in their interactions with children of color when they treat students equitably and with regard. This reiterates the importance of the sub-category of *persona work* I call "expressive patterns," which relates to the ways in which teachers (differentially) engage expressively with children in their classrooms. Further, research shows that White teachers are especially successful when they have high academic expectations for children and when they engage with all children equally, especially in relation to the academic content. When describing teachers' expressive patterns, therefore, I argue it is especially important to consider the frequency that teachers engage with children around the subject matter and as intellectuals as opposed to only interacting with children about extraneous, "personal" topics.

In general, this strand of research is useful for (a) further articulating specific elements of teachers' *persona work*; (b) considering the relationship between *persona work*, identity, and context; and (c) considering how justice and equity can and should mediate teachers' expressive performances in the classroom. However, few of these studies also include the voices of the children themselves. They therefore raise questions about how children experienced these teachers' asset-based pedagogies similarly or differently, even within the same racial and ethnic group. Further, although they frequently allude to aspects of what I call teachers' *persona work*, these studies do not consistently attend to teachers' expressive behaviors.

I end with a final note about this strand of educational research. As Boucher (2016) pointed out, many research accounts on cross-cultural and asset-based pedagogies focus primarily on interactions between White teachers and Black students. Such a binary, he argued,

is useful for understanding important aspects of interpersonal interaction in the classroom. However, Boucher also reminded us of the socially constructed nature of such a binary:

> While the binary of Black and White does not even scratch the surface of the range of human diversity in today's urban classrooms, strategic essentialism is meant to be a temporary condition practiced as a way to create a space for the discussion of race and other real historical issues. After the use of essentialism, it is important to begin to build a new standpoint so that a particular essentialism is no longer needed … It is important for researchers to acknowledge that while group identifications are real, while historical inequity is real, and while racism is real, the racialized concepts that ground these notions are socially constructed and not based on any determinable differences. (p. 89)

Although I attend specifically in my own dissertation study to the *persona work* of White teachers and their interactions with children of color (and Black children especially), I am not assuming the responses and views of these participants will be the homogenous, nor am I assuming they are representative of those of other individuals who share the same racial identities.

Towards a Theoretical Framework of *Persona Work*

This dissertation investigates a ubiquitous and central part of teachers' work: their expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns when instructing and engaging with children. No single body of research is associated with the expressive dimensions of teachers' work, which I call *persona work*. Articulation of ideas related to *aspects* of *persona work* in the existing educational research was also largely underspecified. For example, many accounts lacked detail about teachers' instructional contexts or did not provide close descriptions of teachers' instructional practice. Relatedly, no single strand of research simultaneously considered teachers' expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns, while also attending to mediating factors related to teachers' and students' identity and the teaching context. Specifically, I argue that the field would benefit from more of the following types of educational research as a way of further illuminating the role of expressive work in teachers' practice:

a) Research that describes teachers' moment-to-moment verbal and nonverbal behaviors and how these behaviors shift in different instructional contexts and content areas.

b) Research that investigates how teachers' different intersectional identities, experiences,

and expertise inform their *persona work*, and how children's identities and experiences

likewise shape *persona work* in the classroom.

c) Research that describes patterns of how children and groups of children experience

teachers' *persona work* similarly and differently, considering their own identities and

experiences.

d) Research related to facets of teachers' *persona work* that considers the perspectives of

both teachers and students, and which provides close, concrete examples of teachers'

practice to illustrate their *persona work*.

Despite these limitations, I also argue the strands of educational research reviewed in this chapter nevertheless provide important insights about the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice. Together, they represent a multidisciplinary body of work that can illuminate critical facets of teachers' *persona work*. Specifically, one body of research related to teachers' professional identity and performance underscores the relationship between teachers' intersectional identities and their *persona work*. It also shows how the professional roles teachers enact in the classroom can shift based on contextual factors or changes in identity concepts. Another body of research emerging from the immediacy and process-product bodies of literature suggests that teachers' verbal and nonverbal behaviors might be conducive for bringing about higher levels of student achievement, engagement, and participation. This research draws on studies from communication and psychology to specify the components of *persona work*. Last, research on cross-cultural communication and asset-based pedagogies considers the situated nature of classroom interaction, and shows how identity and power can mediate teachers' and children's communication. It also highlights historical patterns of inequity perpetuated through the communication acts of White teachers when instructing children of color.

Reviewing the literature provided a useful first step in developing a theoretical framework around teachers' *persona work*. Specifically, it elucidated several important considerations related to teachers' *persona work*:

- *Considerations about the components of* persona work: This review of the literature

helped to extend my understanding of the components of teachers' *persona work*. I

argued in Chapter 1 that, in practice, teachers' *persona work* encompasses their concrete

expressive behaviors, their broader stylistic approaches, or *expressive demeanors*, and the

expressive patterns through which teachers (differentially) deployed those expressive

behaviors. Specifically, drawing on articulations of teachers' verbal and nonverbal behaviors that emerged from the behavioral research strand, I now add to this idea. I suggest expressive behaviors entail not only nonverbal behaviors like gesture or expression, but also include verbal moves, such as humor or self-disclosure. I also propose that expressive behaviors also relate to specific ways teachers physically themselves in relation to children and classroom space (e.g., through proximity). Further, drawing on research related to cross-cultural and asset-based pedagogy, I suggest that teachers' *expressive patterns* might be critical indicators of teachers' equitable engagement with children. I also argue that teachers' expressive patterns when interacting with children around the academic content might be especially important.

- *Considerations about intentionality in persona work*: I draw on the literature to argue that *persona work* sometimes entails purposeful use of expressive behaviors or intentional adoption of expressive demeanors during instructional interactions. However, I also argue that *persona work* occurs whether teachers mean it to or not, and is always visible (and influential on) children. Both *persona work* that is conscious and intentional and *persona work* that happens as the result of habit or instinct and which is largely unconscious has the power to shape children's experiences and perceptions.

- *Considerations about the situated and transactional nature of* persona work*:* Implicit in my review of some of the empirical and theoretical bodies of research is the notion that teachers' professional identities and communication acts ought to be changing and responsive, shaped by the setting and informed by the children. I similarly argue that teachers' *persona work* may also need to be both fluid and transactional. For example, how teachers use aspects of *self* should, arguably, change depending on teachers' purpose and context. Further, I suggest that when using *persona work*, teachers should be attentive to how different children will interpret and experience their expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns. They should also attend to implicit messages of power and privilege in their *persona work*. It may be, in fact, that *persona work* of both teachers and children is dynamic and transactional, and needs to be co-constructed and representative of some hybrid combination of expressive styles and approaches among teachers and students.

Based on these theoretical considerations, I argue that *persona work* is dynamic and complex in terms of (a) how it is enacted and interpreted by teachers and children, and (b) how it is informed and influenced by teaching context and identity. In this study, therefore, in addition to exploring concrete expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns in teachers' instructional and relational practice, I consider both teachers' conceptions about their *persona work* and children's responses to it. By incorporating this array of analytic lenses, my hope is to align my theoretical and methodological frameworks, cohering the multidimensional ways *persona work* is experienced and enacted with varied ways of studying it.

Chapter 3
RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

This dissertation unpacks the expressive dimensions of teachers' work in the classroom, which I call their *persona work*. The goal of this dissertation is to describe the components of teachers' *persona work* and to articulate its purposes. This dissertation also explores ways *persona work* can facilitate (and interfere with) classroom interactions between the teacher, the children, the content, and the larger classroom environment. To do so, I analyzed observational, interview, and survey data from eight diverse middle school classrooms pertaining to teachers' *persona work* and how it was experienced by children. This chapter describes these data and my methods of analysis.

The chapter begins by outlining my broad study design and its rationale. Next, I explain the specific decisions I made about the research context and my recruitment for this study. The chapter then describes my data sources and collection procedures. It next details my methods of analysis, and describes the interpretative frames I used to guide analysis. The chapter ends by explaining the challenges and limitations of this study.

Rationale for Study Design

I have argued in the previous two chapters that teachers' *persona work* likely plays a central role in classroom interaction by helping to mediate classroom interactions between teachers, children, and the content. I have also suggested that *persona work* is largely invisible work. It is difficult to see and hard to study due to its sheer ubiquity in the classroom and, indeed, in any interactional context. Therefore, as I described in the previous chapter, it is understudied in the research on teaching.

Because this dissertation represents an early effort to conceptualize *persona work* in terms of how it functions and what it entails in teaching, it is conceptual-analytical. That is to say, although this dissertation is grounded in empirical data, its contribution to teaching is largely a conceptual one. I use the empirical dimensions of this study to further my emergent theoretical

framework about the purposes of and considerations in *persona work*. This study thus contributes to the field's broader conceptual understanding about the critical domain of the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice.

To study *persona work* in the classroom, I adopted a multifaceted approach. This study employs a multiple case study design that considers the voices of teachers and children also the expressive facets of teachers' instructional and relational practice. To facilitate the unpacking of teachers' *persona work* and its relationship to other dimensions of teaching and classrooms, I made purposeful choices about my research site, the identities of study participants, and the types of data I collected. I describe and explain these decisions in the following section.

A Case of What? Overview of Study Design

To guide my data collection and analysis, I loosely adopted a multiple case study framework, as described by Yin (2013). I investigated *persona work* within and across six teachers and eight classrooms. Each case, or site of investigation, shared several broad features. These classrooms were taught by experienced White, female, middle class teachers who were deemed "expert" by school administrators. The classrooms were racially and socioeconomically diverse. They all entailed English language arts (ELA) or social studies instruction (or a combination of the two). The common features of these cases are summarized in Table 3.1 and described in more detail in the sections that follow.

The shared features of each classroom "case" mirror national trends related to schooling demographics. Like these cases, the U.S. teaching force is predominately White, middle class and female. Additionally, as classrooms in the U.S. are growing increasingly diverse, many (White) teachers work in cross-cultural contexts. Each of the classrooms featured in this study is, therefore, what Yin calls a "common" case. The classrooms "capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest" (Yin, 2013, p. 52).

Table 3.1

Features of each classroom "case"

Category	Descriptive Features
Schools (n=2)	Adjacent urban and suburban districts with similar populations of children
	Focus schools (i.e., wide discrepancy between the top achieving children and the children with the lowest test scores)
Classrooms (n=8)	Middle school (6, 7, 8)
	English language arts and/or social studies
	Largely diverse and heterogeneous in terms of student identity and ability
Teachers (n=6)	At least seven years
	"Highly effective" ratings from district and administrators
	White, middle class, female
Children (n>200)	Multiracial and multiethnic; many class backgrounds

By adopting a multiple case study design, I was able to explore the construct of *persona work* across multiple contexts that shared broadly similar characteristics, but were nevertheless unique. My assumption was not that these classroom "cases" would be replicas of one another, or that teachers' *persona work* and children's responses to it would function in the same way. Rather, my hope was that, by standardizing classroom "cases" across these broad parameters, I would make facets of the complex and expansive phenomenon of *persona work* more visible and easier to study. Constraining the cases in this way allowed me to consider the relationship between *persona work* and similar aspects of teachers' and children's identities. I recognize, however, that these cases are far from representative of all teachers or children or all possible variations and purposes of *persona work*. Therefore, the claims emerging from this study are meant to be exploratory only.

The Research Sites

This study explores the domain of *persona work* across eight classrooms in two different schools, Apple Creek Middle School and West Learning Academy. (Names of all places and people are pseudonyms.) The schools are in adjacent districts in Michigan, and both are middle schools. The demographics of these schools and their districts broadly mirrored national demographic schooling trends (Feistritzer, 2011) at the time of the study. Most teachers at these

schools were White, middle class and female, whereas the student population at these schools and districts was rapidly growing more diverse racially and socioeconomically. At the time of the study, five participating teachers were employed at Apple Creek, whereas only one (Ms. Voss) worked at West Learning Academy.

Although a study of *persona work* in teaching might take place in any educational context, I located it inside middle schools for two reasons. First, I was previously a middle school teacher. When engaging with the children and teachers in this study, therefore, I could call on my former experience as a sixth and seventh grade teacher. With the teachers especially, my former teaching experience was helpful, as it allowed me to position myself as a colleague as much as an external researcher.

I also focused on middle schools because middle school students see multiple teachers and experience multiple classroom settings each day. As a result, I thought they might be better able to describe a variety of *persona work*. I also felt that, given children's mobility between classrooms throughout the school day, they might be better positioned to make comparisons between the *persona work* of participating teachers and the expressive behaviors of other teachers, and I felt these comparisons would be more relevant and timely.

I chose to work with the schools Apple Creek and West Learning for two practical reasons. First, after contacting multiple school districts in southeast Michigan, the districts housing these two schools were the only ones that granted permission for this study. Second, within each district, these schools (a) were the only that housed teachers and classrooms that met the "case" criteria for this study, and (b) were the only schools to grant permission for this study. While another middle school in the same district as Apple Creek also gave permission, its students were almost entirely White and upper middle class. Similarly, another middle school in the same district as West Learning Academy likewise granted permission, but its administrators were unable to recommend any experienced White female teachers of English language arts or social studies.

The schools. West Learning Academy's district housed 3,800 students at the time of the study, more than two-thirds of whom were labeled "economically disadvantaged" by the district and who identified as African-American. West Learning itself enrolled about 180 children. Approximately 47% of the children at West Learning Academy were Black, 40% were White, and 10% were Asian and Hispanic. Further, when this study was conducted, nearly 51% of

students at West Learning were considered economically disadvantaged, slightly less than the district average.

At the time of the study, West Learning had a small staff of approximately ten teachers. All but one of the teachers were female, and eight of the ten teachers were White. As mentioned above, only one teacher in this study, Ms. Voss, worked at West Learning Academy.

West Learning Academy's achievement scores were much higher than district averages in the academic year this study occurred. Only 11.4% of children in grades six through eight were proficient or advanced in English language arts in the larger district that year, compared to the three-quarters of West Learning Academy students who were advanced or proficient in English language arts. In fact, West Learning Academy's academic model was unique. Partially because of district-wide restructuring, it adopted a new curricular approach that emphasized creative and critical thinking, rigorous high school and college preparatory academics, and an inquiry-based curriculum. Many teachers taught multiple subjects in the same class period, and classes were often longer than those at other schools in the district.

The second school in this study, Apple Creek Middle School, employed the remaining five participating teachers. At the time of the study, it was situated within an affluent and predominately White suburban school district housing approximately 5,500 students. In 2011, a few years prior to the start of the study, its surrounding district admitted approximately 1,500 children from a neighboring county, whose schools were struggling to stay open and service its students. Apple Creek became the only middle school in the district to be a "school of choice," meaning it was the only school to open its doors to the displaced children from the other county who were of middle school age. Most of these transferring children were Black and were labeled "economically disadvantaged" by the district. Apple Creek's transition to a "school of choice" meant that, in a single academic year, it went from being a school that was nearly 100% White and affluent to becoming the most racially and socioeconomically diverse school in its district.

Apple Creek had 638 middle school students at the time of the study. Approximately 55% of children were proficient or advanced on English language arts test scores. When this study occurred, Apple Creek was labeled a "focus school" by the state of Michigan. This meant that there was a large difference in student test scores across tested subjects between the top 30% of the highest achieving students and the bottom 30% of lowest achieving students at Apple Creek.

About 45% of children at Apple Creek were White, 35% were Black, 12% were Asian, and 8% were Hispanic. Approximately 35% of students were labeled "economically disadvantaged" by the district at the school, and most of these students were African-American. Twenty different languages were spoken at the school, and there was a large ELL student population of about 60 children.

In contrast to its diverse student body, the teachers at Apple Creek were largely homogenous. Of its 38 teachers, nearly all were White and approximately 75% were women. Only two teachers and one school social worker at the school were non-White and identified as African-American. Many of the teachers at Apple Creek (and all but one of the teachers participating in the study) had been with the school for over five years. This means they were present when the shift in demographics occurred in the student body at Apple Creek in 2011, when it became a "school of choice." This is significant, as it also means these teachers experienced a major shift in the racial and class identities of the children they taught.

The classrooms. Although this study includes only six teachers, it explores teachers' *persona work* and children's responses to it in eight different classrooms. The reason for this is that two of the teachers at Apple Creek, Ms. Williams and Ms. Martin, were observed during two different class periods teaching two different groups of children. These two teachers felt strongly that I should see them teach more than one section to best understand their teaching.

All the participating classes were also very diverse, with typically more than half the students in each identifying as children of color, and with relatively even splits across students' gender identification. Except for Ms. Lombardi's classroom, which only had fifteen children, each of the classrooms in this study housed approximately 30 children. While unintended, this slight variation in class size was generative, as it also allowed me to also consider whether differences in the quantity of children in each class appeared to impact the nature of teachers' expressive behaviors or how students experienced them.

These classrooms featured English language arts (ELA) instruction, social studies, or a combination of the two. Although originally I had intended to focus only on ELA instruction, I found that in both Apple Creek and West Learning Academy typically the same instructors taught in both content areas. Further, in some cases teachers taught both subjects in a single class period. Given this trend, I decided to broaden the focus of my study to also include social studies instruction. My decision was also supported by the teachers themselves. Because at the time of

this study many students were participating in standardized testing in their ELA class periods, some teachers requested that I observe them teaching social studies instead, as they felt there would be more opportunities for me to observe them engaging with children in a non-testing context. Further, by deciding to narrow the subject matter at all, I increased the likelihood of having instructional conditions that were more similar across classroom "cases."

Additionally, although this dissertation does not closely consider the relationship between specific subject-specific pedagogical practices stemming from what Shulman called "pedagogical content knowledge" (Shulman, 1987), it does speculate that teachers' instructional purposes might have some relationship with their *persona work*. Narrowing the content areas under study, therefore, also creates more opportunities for exploring intersections between teachers' *persona work* and content-specific structures and practices. Further, it allows for closer comparisons across teachers' instructional practice in terms of how they enacted *persona work* in similar instructional settings.

Last, I also chose to specifically study these content areas because I am not only a former middle school teacher, but also worked for many years as a middle school ELA and social studies teacher in an interdisciplinary classroom. I am therefore knowledgeable about and familiar with the content-specific practices in these two subject areas. This, in turn, was helpful in guiding my observation and interpretation of data.

The teachers. I identified teachers to participate in this study with the help of administrators at West Learning Academy and Apple Creek. When first contacting school administrators to ask permission for this study, I provided them with my teacher selection criteria. I asked principals to recommend teachers who (a) had more than five years of experience; (b) were rated "highly effective" by the state; (c) had what administrators themselves felt were high levels of instructional and relational expertise; (d) were White, female, and middle class; and (e) taught English language arts (which I later modified to ELA or social studies). Three teachers matching the criteria were recommended by the principal at West Learning Academy, and the principal at Apple Creek recommended five teachers.

I then emailed all teachers directly, and met with all who were interested. I provided a detailed description of the study and offered as an incentive for teachers' participation a gift card of $50. Of the teachers I met with, all five at Apple Creek agreed to participate, whereas only one of the three recommended teachers from West Learning Academy agreed to participate in

the study. As a result, teachers and classrooms from Apple Creek are overrepresented in this study.

For the purposes of manageability and clarity of comparison within and across participants, I narrowed my criteria for teacher participants based race, gender, and social class. These are characteristics that, for better or worse, are commonly used as identity markers in social science research (e.g., Weber, 1998). As I described in the previous chapter, research has also shown the significance of these markers in shaping social dynamics in the classroom. I chose to study the *persona work* of White female teachers in particular because much of the existing teaching workforce is also White, middle class and female in elementary classrooms (Melnick & Zeichner, 1998). I also did so because research has shown that sometimes problems arise in classrooms between White teachers and children of color specifically. Further, one exploratory problem of this dissertation relates to how teachers enact *persona work* in contexts where children have different cultural identities and experiences than their own.

My decision to choose teachers whom administrators considered "expert" was also intentional. A main goal of this study was to articulate how *persona work* functions, and to name its components and purposes. Just as I speculated that *persona work* might shift depending on who teachers are and their intersectional identities, I also hypothesized that it might look different among teachers new to the profession and those who are more expert. Many beginning teachers enter the field with preconceptions that they need only "be themselves" in the classroom, and that their love of children or prior experience working in other settings is sufficient (Weinstein, 1989). Novices may, therefore, be less likely to enact *persona work* that is purposeful or expressively different from how they behave in other contexts. I thus thought experienced teachers might have a more developed awareness of and facility with their *persona work* than novices, and might have a more varied repertoire of expressive behaviors.

Other aspects of teachers' identity or experience I did not specify, as I thought some amount of variation across teachers might lead to interesting and generative findings. For example, many of these teachers grew up in the same neighborhood as the schools where they taught, but not all. Some only taught at one school over the course of their career, while others worked in many different locations. Some previously taught many different ages and subjects, while others had only ever taught middle school or these content areas. While I did not write

such variation into my official selection criteria, I thought the effects of these small variations might be interesting and generative for this study of *persona work*.

      The children. While the teachers in this study were racially homogenous, the children were intentionally multiracial and multiethnic within each classroom. At least half the students in each classroom were children of color and the remaining children were White. The children of color in each classroom were also diverse, representing many different ethnicities, races, and linguistic backgrounds. Although I was unable to access information related to each child's social class due to confidentiality restrictions, participating teachers and the schools' principals indicated these classrooms were also highly diverse in terms of children's socioeconomic backgrounds. However, teachers and principals also indicated that the children labeled "economically disadvantaged" were most often African-American. The specific demographic breakdown of each classroom is presented in Chapter 6 (Table 6.1), which describes children's perceptions of teachers' *persona work*.

      I chose to limit my study to diverse classrooms as another way of constraining my classroom "cases" and creating more opportunities for comparison. These classrooms allowed for the opportunity to observe teachers using *persona work* with children who share similar identities as them, and with children very different from them in terms of gender, race, or class. Thus, the composition of children in each class allowed me to track on whether teachers engaged in *persona work* in ways that were expressively similar or different, depending on the identities of the young people with whom they interacted. I was also able to see whether there were any patterns in children's responses to teachers, depending on their (or, presumably, their teacher's) racial identities or gender.

Data Sources and Collection

      Yin (2014) argued that data sources collected as part of case study analysis should illuminate important aspects of the research questions and align appropriately with the analytic propositions that frame the study. In this dissertation, I included multiple data sources to allow for investigation of multiple dimensions of *persona work*. Specifically, my data sources included video records of classroom teaching, field notes, interviews with teachers, focus groups with

some children in each classroom, and end-of-class surveys administered to most children. These data sources are summarized in Table 3.2 and described more fully below.[4]

Table 3.2

Overview of Data Sources

	Teacher	Students (n)	Video-recorded lesson (n)	Teacher interview (n)	Student focus group (n)	End-of-class surveys (% students responding)				
						1	2	3	4	5
1	Williams (section 1)	32	5	4	1	88% (n=28)	97% (n=31)	91% (n=29)	66% (n=21)	69% (n=22)
2	Williams (section 2)	30	5		1	87% (n=26)	93% (n=28)	83% (n=25)	87% (n=26)	73% (n=22)
3	Voss	28	5	5	2	86% (n=24)	89% (n=25)	89% (n=25)	89% (n=25)	96% (n=27)
4	Martin (section 1)	27	4	5	2	52% (n=14)	52% (n=14)	-	-	37% (n=10)
5	Martin (section 2)	33	6		3	39% (n=13)	42% (n=14)	54% (n=18)	60% (n=20)	58% (n=19)
6	Lombardi	15	5	4	1	80% (n=12)	93% (n=14)	-	93% (n=14)	80% (n=12)
7	Eichner	25	5	4	1	100% (n=25)	96% (n=24)	100% (n=25)	80% (n=20)	100% (n=25)
8	Reid	30	5	4	1	77% (n=23)	83% (n=25)	83% (n=25)	73% (n=22)	-

Classroom Observations and Video Records

Between the end of February and early June, I conducted classroom observations, which I also videotaped. I observed each classroom between four and six times. Given the somewhat uneven nature of the sample, this did result in some teachers receiving more hours of observation than others. For example, Ms. Williams and Ms. Martin each taught in two classrooms that were part of this study, and were therefore observed teaching twice as many class periods as the other teachers. Further, most of the teachers' class periods lasted an hour, but Ms. Lombardi and Ms. Voss taught for double that length of time. Therefore, they were also observed for longer periods.

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[4] As is evident in this table, many more survey responses are missing from children in Ms. Martin's classroom compared to the other participating classrooms in this study. This is because, in comparison to the other teachers, fewer children in Ms. Martin's class were given permission \ to participate in the surveys, even when in most cases children's guardians did allow them to be interviewed or to otherwise participate in the study. The reason for this difference in permission, however, is unclear, as the details of the study were communicated in the same way to these children and their families as they were to other participants.

    Also evident in the table is the fact that, on several occasions, teachers did not administer surveys to children at all. This is denoted by a dash (-). In all four of these cases, the reason for this was that teachers' instruction ran long, and teachers were not able to provide children enough time to complete the surveys as a result.

In general, I staggered my observations across classrooms rather than visiting one teacher's classroom multiple times in a row. I did this so that I could conduct observations at roughly the same time in the academic year for every classroom, rather than observing some classrooms mid-year and others at the end. I speculated that such timing differences might impact what I would be able to see or learn about teachers' *persona work*.

In all classrooms, I set up two video cameras. One tracked the teacher, and another camera was commonly trained on the children. Unfortunately, because many children were not granted permission to be recorded, typically only one-third to one-half of children appeared on camera in each class period despite my having a child-centered camera. However, the children who were recorded were typically racially diverse and were both boys and girls. Thus, in some ways they were generally representative of larger classroom demographics. I thought this second camera would provide rich, interesting data related to children's responses to teachers' *persona work*. I understand, however, the importance of exercising caution in evaluating such data by, for example, attributing different levels of "engagement" or "interest" to children's expressions or behaviors. As Jackson (1990) pointed out, correlations between children's *outward* appearance and what they think and feel are tenuous at best. I therefore used this data only in a supplementary fashion, in conjunction with other the data sources related to children's perspectives, such as the end-of-class student surveys and focus groups described below.

In addition to video recording teachers' instruction, I also took field notes in person. My field notes were open-ended. In them, I noted anything I noticed the teachers doing I felt was interesting or surprising in terms of *persona work*. I also described things I observed children saying or doing in response to different aspects of teachers' instruction or *persona work*. In my field notes I kept a running list of different ways I saw teachers using *persona work* that I wanted to ask them about later, such as ways they used voice when introducing a lesson. When possible after visiting classrooms, I wrote informal post-observational memos that drew on my field notes and other recollections I had from these classroom observations. I also used the memos to record emergent ideas related to my research questions. Timing did not always permit these memos, however, and in total I wrote them after 12 classroom observations.

Teacher Interviews

I conducted between four and five interviews with each teacher in the same general time period that I carried out observations of their classrooms. For each teacher, I conducted an

"opening" and "closing" interview, lasting approximately one-hour. These interviews were semi-structured. In them, I elicited from the teachers information about their personal histories, philosophies of teaching, and their descriptions of the specific classrooms under study. I also asked them to reflect on many aspects of their *persona work*, and to share their thinking about broader themes in teaching, such as related to building relationships with children or differentiating instruction. Additionally, I explicitly asked teachers to talk about the role they thought their own and their children's race, gender, and other aspects of identity had on classroom interaction. Appendix A includes sample questions from these opening and closing interviews.

Second, I conducted one video recall interview with teachers that occurred typically a week after their closing interview. For these sessions, I pre-identified five-to-ten short (i.e., under 5 minutes) video clips of the teacher's *persona work* I had captured during different classroom observations. The clips were intentionally diverse, featuring different instructional contexts and different formations of children. Often, they also featured the teacher engaging in *persona work* in different ways. In one, for example, a teacher might do interesting things with her voice whereas another might highlight different ways she used movement during instruction. Further, in these clips I also tried to include a diverse set of moods or tones. For example, one video clip of Ms. Lombardi captured a humorous exchange between her and her students, whereas another showed her seriously redirecting children's behavior. My identification of these video clips was largely informed by instances I previously flagged as especially interesting in my field notes or memos, or otherwise related to things I wanted to ask teachers more about.

During these video-recall sessions, the teacher and I watched each video clip together. Occasionally I would pause the video and ask the teacher what she was thinking at that moment or why she used her *persona work* in a certain way. One purpose of these video recall sessions was to provide an additional means of triggering teachers' own thinking about their *persona work*. I hypothesized that it was possible for teachers to be systematic in aspects of their *persona work*, for example, but to still carry it out subconsciously and automatically. I thought these video sessions might help them think more carefully about when they were or were not intentional or purposeful in their *persona work*, even when they might not have consciously realized it at the time. Further, these video recall sessions helped me to understand what teachers themselves considered important in their *persona work*, helped clarify my conclusions about

classroom events and aspects of teachers' decision-making, and helped me better understand and contextualize teachers' relationships with different children. Sample video recall questions can also be found in Appendix A.

Finally, I carried out informal check-ins with teachers lasting between five and twenty minutes. In some cases, I recorded these mini-interviews. This was not always possible, however, given they often occurred during transition periods, such as while walking down the hallway. The purpose of these check-ins was to ask teachers quick questions about what I just observed. They also gave teachers a space to tell me anything they thought was important about the class related not just to their *persona work*, but to their instruction and interpersonal work more broadly. Of all the interview formats, these were the most informal and open-ended. I also provide some examples of check-in questions in Appendix A.

End-of-Class Student Surveys

At the end of each observed class, I distributed an end-of-class survey to children. The surveys asked general questions about teachers' instructional style, ethic of care, skill, and orientation to children. For example, they asked children to compare the teacher to others they had, to describe what they thought she was feeling, to say what they liked and disliked about her, to write something the teacher said or did frequently, and so on. At other points, the questions were more specific to children themselves. For example, one asked if children thought the teacher noticed them (and how), and another asked what they believed the teacher felt about them. The surveys often also included a space for children to write (and respond to) their own question about the teacher.

I administered five end-of-class surveys to each classroom. Occasionally, however, the teachers were not able to leave enough time for children to complete them. This is reflected in Table 3.2 (above). Each survey typically had six questions, and the questions were written in varied formats. Sometimes, for example, I asked children to rate something about their teacher on a scale of 1 to 5, whereas at other points I asked them open-ended questions. I repeated many questions (or parts of questions) across the different surveys I administered to each class. I also refined surveys as the study progressed by sharpening questions or changing language to encourage more specific or detailed responses from children. A sample end-of-class survey from the middle of my data collection period can be found in Appendix B.

Most children completed the survey in each class, but not always. First, although nearly all children had permission to do so, this was not the case for all students. For example, nearly half the children in both sections of Ms. Martin's class were not granted permission by parents or guardians to participate. Even when children did have permission, not all wanted to fill out the survey at the end of every class. However, as is evident in Table 3.2 (above), typically over three-quarters of the children did so, and in some cases, many more completed surveys. The subset of children who completed the surveys daily were usually representative of larger demographic patterns in the classroom in terms of their race and gender.

The purpose of these surveys was to access children's thinking about and assessments of their teachers, and to gauge what was most important for them when engaging with teachers. The surveys typically did not mention teachers' *persona work* explicitly. Therefore, I also used them to track on the frequency with which children themselves volunteered ideas related to the expressive dimensions of teaching, as a way to gauge its importance and visibility to students. The surveys were also useful in helping me consider how children's responses to teachers varied, and whether this correlated with their race or gender.

Focus Groups

A subset of students from each classroom also participated in focus group interviews as part of this research study. While the end-of-class surveys elicited large numbers of students' thinking about a broad range of topics, the focus groups offered an opportunity to dive deeper. In these focus group interviews, I asked children many of the questions I did on the surveys, but was also able to ask for clarification and examples. The focus groups also provided a space to follow up on themes I saw emerging in the students' surveys about their teacher, or about teaching more broadly. For sample focus groups questions, see Appendix C.

Focus group participation was entirely voluntary and, like the student surveys, it required additional permission from children's parents and guardians. In some classrooms, such as those belonging to Ms. Martin, many children were eager to participate, and I conducted multiple focus groups. However, this was not always the case. Focus groups coincided with children's lunch period and, depending on what children wanted to do during that time, their interest varied.

Overall, between one and three focus groups took place for each class. Across *all* focus groups, the percentages of children participating from different races and genders was roughly equivalent to the demographic breakdown of children's broader participation in this study for

each classroom (see Table 3.2). However, within each individual focus group were large variations in terms of students' race and gender, and not every focus group was equally diverse. In Chapter 6, which deals specifically with children's perceptions of teachers' *persona work*, I provide the specific number of focus groups that took place within each classroom and give the demographic breakdown of the children participating in each (see Table 6.2).

Unlike the end-of-class surveys, in the focus groups I specifically prompted children to describe and reflect on what I call teachers' *persona work*. To help, I had video clips of teachers in case I needed to prompt children's thinking about teachers' expressive work. I hypothesized that children might have limited language for talking about their teachers' *persona work*, and thought these video excerpts would ground children's comments in shared, concrete examples of the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice. Typically, I began each focus group with a one-minute video clip emerging to my last recording of that teacher's instruction to prompt children's talk. Then, depending on how much children had to say, I sometimes showed several more videos throughout the focus group and asked them to continue to reflect on what their teacher was doing expressively. More typically, however, the students had plenty to talk about without any further prompting from me, and they often talked for the remainder of the time without needing or desiring to watch more video.

Likely because many children joined focus groups with at least some of their friends, they appeared comfortable and eager to share their opinions about their teacher and the school more broadly. When I explained my own role to children, some indicated their relief that I was not myself currently a classroom teacher. They said they had worried I would share what they said with their teachers, but felt better knowing I was no longer a classroom teacher myself. However, many of the children were also excited to hear I taught preservice teachers, and wanted to me to pass their insights on to my own teaching students.

Managing Risk

In general, an inherent problem in studying both teachers and children was that teachers sometimes wanted to know what their students said about them. Similarly, children sometimes asked me personal questions about teachers' lives, or wanted me to share with them my frank assessments of their teachers' abilities. In interactions with both teachers and children, therefore, I had to be clear about what I was not able or willing to share. For example, children's end-of-class surveys and focus group interviews were completely confidential, and I often had to gently

remind both them and teachers of this. Similarly, I told teachers I would not reveal to students or other participating teachers (especially in the case of Apple Creek, which housed five of the six teacher participants) anything they said.

Further, I frequently reminded children and teachers that the study was completely voluntary, and that they were free to opt out at any point. They were also free, I reminded them, to choose not to answer specific questions or, in the case of the children specifically, to participate in one or more surveys. Especially in cases where I asked children and teachers personal questions about race or other aspects of identity, these reminders were important, as I did not want them to feel compelled to answer.

To manage the large amount of data from multiple sources, I designed an overall storage and anonymization system. I transcribed and stored data by type and source on a University of Michigan encrypted site intended for that purpose. I also digitized all end-of-class surveys and field notes and stored them after each observation. Every time I digitally stored data, I also anonymized it by assigning teachers and children numbers and groups.

Data Analysis

Many theoretical and empirical perspectives helped me articulate the construct under study related to the domain of *persona work*. I have proposed in previous chapters that teachers' *persona work* can help them enact different instructional and relational purposes in the classroom, but also that it might interfere with their capacity to bring about productive interactions in the classroom. Specifically, I have suggested that teachers and children may not share the same perceptions and understandings about teachers' *persona work*, and that it thus might create conflict, especially in cross-cultural contexts. I have also used the literature to suggest that *persona work* that is more successful is likely not static, but rather responsive and fluid depending on context.

Echoing these assertions, my research questions are:

1. What was the content, form, and structure of teachers' *persona work*?

    - How did teachers talk about their *persona work*, and to what extent were they intentional in its use?
    - How did teachers' creation and use of *personas* compare across classrooms? What patterns emerged in teachers' *persona work?*

2. What were the purposes of teachers' *persona work*?

- What did teachers' *persona work* appear to help them do?

- What are some of the issues and considerations that arose in teachers' *persona work*?

3. How did the children think about teachers' *persona work*?

- What did children notice about it? How did they react to it?

These research questions are intentionally about different facets *of persona work*. However, there is substantial thematic overlap among them, as they are meant to articulate different parts of a *single* phenomenon.

My data analysis followed what Yin called an "explanation building" (2014, p. 147) framework, which he argued was especially suited for multiple case study analysis. Drawing on several interpretative frameworks, I first analyzed data for each "case," or classroom, and then looked across cases. I did so iteratively, taking up each of my research questions in turn. As new patterns emerged in the data within or across cases, I revised and expanded my codes and analytic criteria, and then returned to reanalyze all preceding cases considering these shifts in my explanatory framework. Although my analysis was iterative, I nevertheless tried to carry it out in the same general order, at least in my initial pass through the data. This order loosely coincided with my research questions. I wrote regular memos throughout the process of coding and analysis, which helped me organize and build a historical record of my thinking.

Yin warned researchers to beware of moments when their iterative explanation building might push them away from the original topic of interest. To guard against this, I continually revisited my research questions and broader theoretical framework to remind me of my argument and the central components of this phenomenon. Also, I did not assume my initial explanation for the construct of *persona work* or my initial understanding about what it entailed was correct or complete, especially given the conceptual-analytic nature of this study. In general, with each iterative revision of my explanatory frame and each addition of a new, emergent idea, I also tried to remain open to disconfirming instances.

Because my theorization about *persona work* is multifaceted, studying it also necessitated multiple interpretive lenses to guide my analysis. These included using children's perceptions as a sensitizing framework, employing a priori propositions about *persona work* related to the literature, and using the instructional triangle for analysis. Typically, one of these interpretative

frames guided my analysis of each research question. It is worth noting, however, that because my analytic process was iterative, each of these interpretative lenses ultimately influenced analysis of *all* research questions in important ways. Collectively, the analysis emerging from these interpretative lenses provided a useful starting point for considering how *persona work* functioned and what it entailed in the classrooms I studied.

Analytic Process

Analysis for this study happened in three stages that correlated with the three research questions. These are described below, along with their accompanying interpretative lenses.

Stage 1: Describing children's conceptions of *persona work*. This first stage of analysis focused on my third research question, which is meant to examine the awareness children had of *persona work*, how they understood it, and what they thought were its purposes. This stage of analysis primarily revolved around the focus groups of children and the end-of-class surveys.

Interpretative lens: Children's perspectives as sensitizing framework. Because teachers' use of voice, body language, expression, and other aspects of their *persona work* was ubiquitous, it was not always visible or easy to document. To guide my attention to central aspects of and considerations around teachers' *persona work* and its role in the classroom, I therefore turned to the students' observations of their teachers as an initial guide. Broadly speaking, children's perceptions of teachers can provide clues about what makes a teacher "good" or "bad," and can shed light on what teachers instrumentally do to make children feel that way. Given that I argue that *persona work* is dense, pervasive, and difficult to discern, children's perceptions essentially provide a "sensitizing framework" for articulating important categories and components of teachers' *persona work*. For example, as I will describe later in this dissertation (Chapter 6), many children wanted to be treated "fairly" by their teachers and to feel noticed by them. They provided specific examples of what this meant in terms of how their teachers used aspects of *self*, such as their voice or body.

It is possible children's perceptions about teachers' *persona work* can provide important clues about teachers' subconscious orientations and beliefs that impact the expressive dimensions of their practice. For example, some educational theorists have argued (Braun, 1976; Waller, 1932) that children have a strong capacity to intuit how teachers feel about them, even when the teachers are not aware of it themselves. In other words, there is often something teachers expressively *do* when interacting with students that makes their perceptions of students

at least partially visible. This can, in turn, affect children's own experiences in the classroom positively and negatively. Children's perceptions can help reveal implicit patterns of privilege or censorship communicated through teachers' *persona work* that may not even be evident to the teachers themselves.

By using children's perceptions as an initial interpretive frame, I could also check some of my own biases and assumptions about what was important about teachers' *persona work* and its impact on children. Like the teachers in this study, I too am a White, middle class woman. These shared aspects of identity might have led us to notice similar things about *persona work* and its effects, or to draw certain common conclusions about it. By, in contrast, using children's perceptions as an interpretative frame, I hoped to broaden my capacity to see and understand how *persona work* functioned in these classrooms. Children's perceptions in this study served as a beacon, shedding light on aspects of *persona work* that might have otherwise gone unseen by me.

Coding of student data. I first coded the student interview and survey data, in order to use children's perspectives as a sensitizing framework for the remainder of my analysis. The initial codes I applied to the data regarding children were typically broad and varied. For instance, these codes pertained to things children found interesting or boring (e.g., explanations, teaching styles), things they wanted teachers to do (e.g., call on them, be nice), and examples of "bad" teaching (e.g., being ignored, racist teachers, personal questions). I carried out this process of open coding for each "case," or classroom, before moving onto the next "case." Then, as I moved across classrooms, I found myself reusing some of the same open codes. However, I tried not to limit myself to these codes or to anticipate them. Instead, I coded each piece of data systematically, remaining open to emergent themes.

I then moved to axial coding of the children's focus groups and surveys. I did this by looking across my emergent codes and identifying themes and patterns among them (beginning with the surveys and then moving to look at focus group interviews). For example, I identified points in these interviews and surveys where children similarly provided examples of teachers' *persona work*. I compared these examples and considered ways in which they were conceptually similar or different. I created umbrella codes for major emergent themes and collapsed minor codes underneath each. This work was iterative. Over time, my codes shifted and progressively sharpened. Table 3.3 shows an example of a later iteration of these umbrella codes and their

linked subsidiary codes and data exemplars related to children's conceptions about the purposes of teachers' *persona work*.

Table 3.3

Student Data Chart: Purposes of Persona Work—Codes and Data Exemplars v. 3

Umbrella codes	Subsidiary codes	Data exemplar(s)
Help them feel known	*Being yourself*	"I liked that our teacher let us be ourselves and express our feelings." (Ex3, ET1, 1)
	Academic knowing	"My teacher knows me because she knows how I work and how things can sometimes get hard for me." (Ex6, FG2, 23)
	Personal knowing	"It's important they know you so they know what you're capable of and won't underestimate you." (Ex4, P1, ET1, 30)
Help them feel noticed	*Noticing and participating*	"She noticed me because I got called on a lot." (Ex6, ET5, 20) "She didn't notice me but it wasn't her fault because my hand wasn't up." (Ex3, ET5, 24)
	Academic noticing	"She noticed that I was working in my group and she listened to my opinions and helped me." (Ex1, P1, FG2, 2)
	Not being noticed	"She ignored me as usual." (Ex4, P1, ET2, 18)
Engage them	*Disclosure*	"When she tells stories about her life, people are interested." (Ex6, ET2, 14)
	Explanations	"She can explain a lot of stuff well so we understand it but also so we want to listen to it." (Ex1, P1, FG1, 17)
	Humor	"She adds humor to wake us up." (Ex3, ET4, 17)
Shape their assessments (good/bad) of teachers	*Fun/engaging*	"She is a good teacher because she makes me laugh." (Ex5, ET2, 14)
	Skillful	"She is a good teacher because she speaks with good intention and she knows how to do it well." (Ex3, ET5, 15) "It makes a difference when teachers have a lot of experience. They're better." (Ex1, P2, FG1, 2)
	Academic notice	"She treats us well, she is a good teacher because she gives us all attention in class." (Ex6, ET2, 15)
	Fair/unfair	"I like her because she doesn't have favorites." (Ex1, P2, FG2, 8)
	Take children seriously	"She's different, better, than the other teachers because she will listen to you and not get an attitude and actually think about what you say." (Ex2, FG1, 7)
	Losing control	"Some teachers, they just yell at you for no reason and they don't even make any sense." (Ex3, FG1, 9) "My teacher, she's always the same. Other teachers aren't always like that and you don't know what you're going to get." (Ex2, FG1, 3)
Clues about teachers' (un)fairness	*Attention and participation*	"She makes sure we all know what to do and she gives us all a chance to talk but it's not overbearing." (Ex1, P1, FG1, 13)
	Flexibility and patience	"She gives us a lot of leeway and she understands us, and she'll teach the way that you learn best." (Ex4, P2, 26)
	Equity / inequity	"She laughs at Black jokes, unlike other teachers." (Ex3, FG2, 7)

Before transitioning into other stages of analysis, I engaged in one more sub-phase of coding of the student data. My theoretical frame suggested that variables related to aspects of identity like race or gender might lead children to experience and interpret teachers' *persona work* differently, depending on teachers' own intersectional identities. The theoretical frame also suggested that (White) teachers' expressive patterns might vary depending on students' race and gender, and might be unevenly equitable. Therefore, in this final phase of analysis of the student data, I cross-listed patterns in children's responses with race and gender. Specifically, I cross-listed the data examples that fell within each umbrella and subsidiary code with children's race and gender. I attended both to whether responses of children of different races and genders were evenly represented within each code, and to the nature of children's responses based on their gender and race. For example, I looked to see if the responses of White girls and Black boys were similar or different related to their teacher's *persona work*. As I will describe in Chapter 6, I found some correlation between children's race and gender and their perceptions about teachers, especially within one classroom.

Stage 2: Specifying the components of persona work. The second analytic stage primarily aligns with my first research question, which asks about the parts of *persona work* and how they work together, and which calls for an investigation of patterns in how teachers used it within and across classrooms. Because in this stage of analysis I was principally interested in specifying the components of *teachers' persona work*, in cases where I had multiple videos from single class periods that featured different camera angles, I analyzed the video footage that best illuminated the teacher's practice rather than that which was trained on the children. Additionally, this stage of analysis draws on teachers' interview data.

Interpretative lens: A priori propositions about expressive behaviors. The second interpretative frame I employed for this stage of analysis encompassed a set of a priori propositions about the central components of *persona work*. These propositions about singular aspects of *persona work*, to which I alluded in the previous chapter, have emerged from literature on communication and interaction in teaching and in other fields (e.g., Anderson & Guerrero, 1999; Ekman, 1993; Ekman & Friesen, 1972; Grumet, 1999; Jaworski, Guerrero, & Hecht, 1999; Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013; Kopacz, 1999; Kraut & Johnston, 1999; Lempert, 2012; Manusov, 1999; Montepare, Steinberg, & Rosenberg, 1992; Nakane, 2006; Paulston, Kiesling, Rangel, & Holmes, J., 2012; Planalp, 1999; Segrin, 1999; Semic, 1999; Tannen, 2012).

Specifically, these propositions entailed a list of common expressive behaviors which researchers argued are often central to and influential in interpersonal interaction.

This a priori lens related to common expressive behaviors helped me to decompose, name, and describe the dense layers of teachers' *persona work*. For example, this interpretative lens prompted me to notice specific aspects of teachers' nonverbal behaviors, such as gaze or gesture, along with facets of their verbal behaviors such as vocal proxemics and words choice, that I might not otherwise have done. Additionally, this interpretative lens sensitized me to common communication patterns, such as humor, indirectness, or turn-taking, that researchers have argued can be especially visible to and influential on interaction partners in many different interpersonal contexts.

I used this interpretative lens to guide my close descriptions of teachers' concrete, observable *persona work*. For example, as I will describe below, I used it to develop a semi-structured video observation protocol that listed specific aspects of teachers' *persona work* I wanted track on in my analysis of video. I also used this interpretative lens to help me think not just about the individual components of expressive behaviors, but also about how they worked together.

***Conceptualizing teachers' understanding of* persona work**. Coding in this second stage of analysis occurred in two phases. First, I analyzed teachers' interview data to learn how teachers understood their *persona work* and to explore the extent to which they were intentional in its use. I used largely the same analytic coding process I described in relation to the student data. For example, in my initial pass at open coding, I tried to stay open-minded and notice new themes and examples and to attend to disconfirming instances. As with my first round of coding of student data, the initial open codes pertaining to teachers' interviews were typically very general. Examples included "experience," "conflict," "philosophy," and "expressive references."

Next, I moved to axial coding of teachers' interviews. I looked across classrooms and teachers to identify emergent patterns and themes, just as I did with the student data, and I used these to generate umbrella codes. As an example, umbrella codes related to teachers' references to the purposes of their *persona work* is presented in Table 3.4. As I did with the student data, I iteratively revised, collapsed, and added to these codes as analysis progressed.

As an example, in a second round of analysis of teacher data I used the umbrella codes emerging from *children's* perceptions of teachers as an analytic frame. I systematically looked

for explicit mention of themes generated by children in teachers' own talk. For example, in one case in which children overwhelmingly indicated their teacher never became angry, I looked for references to anger (or its absence) in the teacher's own comments. In another example, when children explicitly praised teachers for treating them fairly, I looked for similar references to "fairness" in the teachers' interviews.

Table 3.4
Teacher Data Chart: Subliminal Purposes of Persona Work—*Codes and Data Exemplars v. 2*

Umbrella codes	Description	Data exemplar(s)
Conveying notice	Literally showing children that teachers "see" them, or else calling on them and otherwise acknowledging them in class.	"You have to always be scanning your audience" (Ex6, IN1)
Growing personal connections	Using warmth, humor, attention, eliciting, and praise to help make connections with children, often academically.	"I think I try to get to each kid many times, some more than others. And there are times with kids I'm just more comfortable with I will stop and joke sometimes. I wouldn't do that with every kid just because we haven't made that connection." (Ex1, IN4)
Managing own attitude and emotions	Hiding parts of "self," or strategically sharing "personal" details.	"It took everything in my power to recompose myself in those five minutes, dealing with him while he's still yelling, to come back and teach." (Ex2, IN1)
Directing children's attention	Using emphasis, gesture, and other expressive behaviors to help children know where to look and what to attend to.	"If I'm really quiet they often realize I'm waiting for somebody to figure out and sometimes they'll get uncomfortable with the silence and so it really makes them pay attention." (Ex2, IN1) "I probably *ask* them to look at me a lot. 'Guys, are you with me? I can't tell if you're with me'." (Ex3, IN4)
Engaging children	Inspiring and sustaining children's interest, especially in the content.	"You have to keep it interesting. I guess that affects what you do, or how you do it." (Ex5, IN2)
Managing student talk and actions	Sending subtle reminders through expressive behaviors that redirect children.	"When I say, 'It's time to wrap up your conversations,' I should probably give them time to wrap up their conversations. Sometimes I immediately start speaking and that sometimes leads to my frustration." (Ex1, IN5)
Modeling behaviors	Modeling what it looks like to engage "appropriately" with one another or with the content.	"When I get quiet, they get quiet." (Ex1, IN2) "I read quietly with them during silent reading, so they can see what it looks like." (Ex3, IN2)

In general, across both the student and teacher data, many shared themes emerged related to the purposes of *persona work*. Additionally, children and teachers both commonly referred to difficulties, miscommunication, or conflict in teacher-student interactions. Further, analysis of

both teacher and student data unearthed correlations between aspects and interpretations of *persona work* and the race and gender of students.

      ***Identifying the components of* persona work**. A subsequent analytic phase pertaining to this second stage of analysis investigated the video records of teachers' practice related to their *persona work*. When analyzing video data, I first watched and wrote memos about all videos within each classroom "case" before moving onto the next set of videos. I used a semi-structured Video Observation Tool (see Appendix D) to record my observations. Because of the large amount of data in this study, I was not able to use this observational tool in conjunction with every classroom episode. However, I used it to describe teachers' *persona work* within at least two class periods for each classroom "case," and often more.

      The tool included a list of discrete expressive behaviors and patterns that I should be tracking on as I watched videos, such as "gaze" or "movement." These behaviors were primarily derived from the second interpretative lens listing common components and behaviors in human interaction. A subset of the expressive behaviors and patterns featured on this tool also emerged from my analysis itself. For example, I included "calling on kids" as an expressive category on the tool, as this was something children flagged as important related to teachers' *persona work*.

      The observational tool led me to describe teachers' different expressive behaviors during an entire class period. To facilitate closer description, the tool also broke down the class period into "intervals." My definition of what counted as an "interval," however, developed organically over the course of my analysis. Initially, I loosely understood intervals as signifying similar instructional contexts (e.g., group work). However, as my analysis progressed, I found that teachers' *persona work* often also changed *within* these broader instructional categories, depending on what they appeared to do. Therefore, as coding continued, I narrowed my definition of "interval" to encompass smaller expressive shifts (e.g., refocusing children, maintain momentum, distracting students) even within the same instructional episode or instance.

      To learn more about the components of *persona work* and how they worked together, I also engaged in several close descriptions of teachers' *persona work*. The purpose of these descriptions was to document how different expressive behaviors (e.g., voice, body) functioned in conjunction with one another, and how these behaviors fluctuated depending on what teachers said and did instructionally. Sometimes, these close descriptions unearthed additional

components of teachers' *persona work* that consistently seemed important, and which I therefore included in later iterations of my video observational tool. For example, in later drafts of the tool I included the expressive categories of "silence" and "stillness," which emerged in my close descriptions of teachers' *persona work* as something many teachers employed. For an example of a "close description" of teachers' *persona work*, see Table 3.5.

   ***Identifying patterns in* persona work.** As a final step in this second stage of analysis focusing on video records and teacher interviews, I then looked across these disparate data sources for patterns. I asked myself questions to guide this comparative analysis. For example, are there moments when multiple teachers enact *persona work* in similar ways? Are there common ways these teachers talk about their *persona work*, and is that evident in what they do expressively?

   This final analytic phase in this second stage unearthed 21 common "bundles" of expressive behaviors that teachers used when enacting *persona work*. These are explained in the next chapter. As each expressive "bundle" emerged, I re-watched relevant video to consider how it was enacted similarly or differently across teachers, and reexamined interview data of children and teachers for additional mentions of it. I also wrote memos on each of these emergent aspects of *persona work,* or expressive "bundles." In these memos, I described what these aspects of *persona work* looked like and entailed expressively, and considered their instructional or relational purposes. An example of such a memo can be found in Table 3.6 in relation to one such "bundle," which I call "lightening."

Table 3.5

Close description of expressive interval: Ms. Voss, poetry launch— Obs2, 2.1, 18:19-22:40

Words / Stress	Volume / Tone	Gesture / Movement	Expression / Gaze
So, we're going to be using those *deep*	Strong, steady	Right hand pulls down abruptly, begins to walk forward	Grimaces with "deep," chin jutting forward
words within us that resonate from the	Strong, steady	Cups hand and gestures to chest, walking slowly	Eyes scanning
inside [one second pause]	Strong, steady	Slight break in during pause	Eyes scanning
deeply [one second pause],	Strong, steady	Another slight during pause	Eyes scanning
not the words that are just, like, on the surface. [Two second pause]	Strong, steady	Sweeping hands wide, mimicking something staying on surface; body still at pause	Looks abruptly to the side, appears to be speaking to one table group
So, I want you to *think* about	Strong, steady	Slight swaying, hand up but not yet gesturing- apparently frozen	Turns head to front again
Those things that you *dream*, Those things you *believe* in, Things you hear inside your head	Strong, steady	Begins rhythmically – in time to words- to lift and lower right first ("dream" as downbeat); is still	Looks at one part of the room
Have you ever—you know how at *night* [tone much brighter, faster]	Lighter, quick, almost whispering, more colloquial tone	Slight shrug of shoulders, hand out, shoulders up, standing	Leans forward, juts chin
Where you're laying down	Still lighter, still feeling of a whisper	Both hands now out in front, palms down, elbows out, standing	Leaning forward
And you're getting ready to go to sleep	Still lighter, still feeling of a whisper	Arms still, still out from sides, no movement otherwise	Slight smile, nodding, eyes wide
And all of a sudden you've got somebody talking to you and you realize it's *you*	Words flow into one another, voice becomes louder, a little sarcastic	Makes a large circular gesture with hands; freezes at "you"	Grimaces now, eyes wide, targeted eye contact
And that you've got all these busy words coming in your head and it just won't let you go to sleep because you --	Carries over tone, colloquial, volume still increases	Commences circular gestures	Shaking head back and forth as if words trapped inside, looks at specific tables
--some of you, some of you may just go to sleep--	Quick, as an aside	Hand up, palm outward	Nodding, slight quirk of mouth
[Slight pause] But I know—some of you may feel what I feel at night where you lay down, you're relaxed, and all of a sudden all of these things start yelling at you.	Words again loud, clear, almost joyful- they have reached crescendo	Jerks body and turns to face middle of the room again with "But," palm against chest	Head back with "lay down", looking up at ceiling—but with "yelling at you"
You think *this*, You want to know about *this*, You are worried about *that* Whatever these things are going on	Says rhythmically, italicized words the downbeat	With each "beat" shoulders rise and fall, arms falling to and from to one side or another	With each "beat" looks somewhere new
Or it might be something you *read* about and it's just going through your *head*, Or a *song*, Or *something*	Picks up rhythm again with "going through your head", voice still relatively loud and clear	Finally begins to move body again after standing still, swaying back and forth in time to her talk; gestures again cyclical around heart and head	Prolonged eye contact with table group on other side of room now
Those are the *deep* things that we're trying to get to.	Says this last bit quickly	Standing still again, shoulders back, ends in a point to a child to talk	Looking at all children now, scanning

Table 3.6
Excerpt from Descriptive Memo on "Lightening"—Aspects of Persona Work *(v. 2)*

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">"Lightening"
This <i>persona</i> move incorporates the teacher's use of humor, joy, fun, and levity in the classroom. It includes smiling, laughing, jokes, sarcasm, and general good cheer. Lightening has many purposes. The purposes tend to occur in all contexts, but they do <i>not</i> all occur simultaneously. In other words, depending on the kind of lightening that is happening, and what the teacher does expressively, she may be more likely to bring about one purpose over another. This practice was not observed one-on-one, as in those contexts teachers tended to be more serious and communicate with more gravity. Rather, lightening appears to be a more <i>public persona</i> practice, one that mostly occurred in the whole class or—sometimes—the small group context. This is not to say that lightening did not appear in interactions between teacher and single students, but these interactions were also <i>public</i>, designed to be overheard and observed. A characteristic of lightening is the way that teachers appeared to balance "fun" with control. Often, when making jokes, class was very structured leading up to that point—and teachers were also quick to "get the kids back" and re-focused on the lesson.</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">Possible purpose</td><td align="center"><i>Description of</i> Persona Work</td></tr>
<tr><td><i>To generate engagement and "buy-in," as when launching a lesson or explaining an idea.</i>
(Whole class, small group)</td><td>

- The teacher almost always has a smile—or perhaps she infuses the *feeling* of "smile" into her vocal tone.
- Often—but not always—she is more animated, louder, with larger gestures. This might also include exaggerations about or "talking up" of the content.
- Sometimes lightening is "slipped into" other instruction, but sometimes the "fun" is the center point of a portion of the teacher's instruction (like a form of "directions" / "attention")
- The teacher sometimes makes jokes using her own experience as the punchline or touchpoint, sometimes accompanied by "goofy," exaggerated expressions.
</td></tr>
<tr><td><i>To communicate to children that they are "known" or "seen," especially in whole class instruction.</i>
(Whole class)</td><td>

- Often no fixed eye contact on any one student, and often "slipped into" other instruction
- Generally, jokes and joy targeted at individual students or groups of students, highlighting something they are doing to the class
- The teacher might "name" or indirectly reference an individual student, but not always
</td></tr>
<tr><td><i>To soften or sharpen directions and/or reminders about student work and behavior.</i>
(Whole class)</td><td>

- The teacher uses levity or humor while or just after doling out a public correction to one or more children.
- It might entail joking about how children "typically" struggle to do the thing she wants them to.
- It might also relate to her *own* difficulty following through on whatever mandate she is enforcing with children.
- While the teacher is no less firm in her correction, doing this infuses a sense of warmth or care into the redirection. It does not feel as harsh.
</td></tr>
</table>

Stage 3: Articulating purposes of and considerations about *persona work***.** This final stage of analysis coincides with my second research question. It investigates the purposes and problems implicit in teachers' *persona work*. This question is the most conceptual-analytic, as it considers the relationship between teachers' *persona work* and classroom interaction between teachers, children, content, and the environment. To investigate this question, I therefore leveraged the framework of the "instructional triangle," which I first introduced in Chapter 1, as an interpretative lens.

Interpretative lens: Instructional triangle as method. The "instructional triangle"
(Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003) (see Figure 3.1) provides a model of classroom interaction
that can apply to any teaching setting. In this model, four primary actors (the teachers, the
students, the content, and the environment) are continually interacting, and their interactions are
situated within and informed by specific contexts. These interactions are dynamic, so that when
something changes with the content, teachers and children are likewise also impacted (and so
on).

In his book on the uncertainties of teaching, McDonald (1992) highlighted this dynamic
relationship between teachers, children, and content:

> Real teaching... happens inside a wild triangle of relations - among teacher, students,
> subject - and the points of this triangle shift continuously. What shall I teach amid all that
> I might teach? How can I grasp it myself so that my grasping may enable theirs? What
> are they thinking and feeling - toward me, toward each other, toward the thing I am trying
> to teach? How near should I come, how far off should I stay? How much clutch, how
> much gas? (McDonald, 1992, p. 1)

However, as McDonald later points out, while the vertices of the triangle (i.e., in this case, the
teacher, the children, the content) are easily observable, the dynamic, nuanced, shifting
interactions between them are much harder to see, track on, and understand. These interactions
are dense and complex, potentially mediated by many different factors related to teachers,
children, or content.
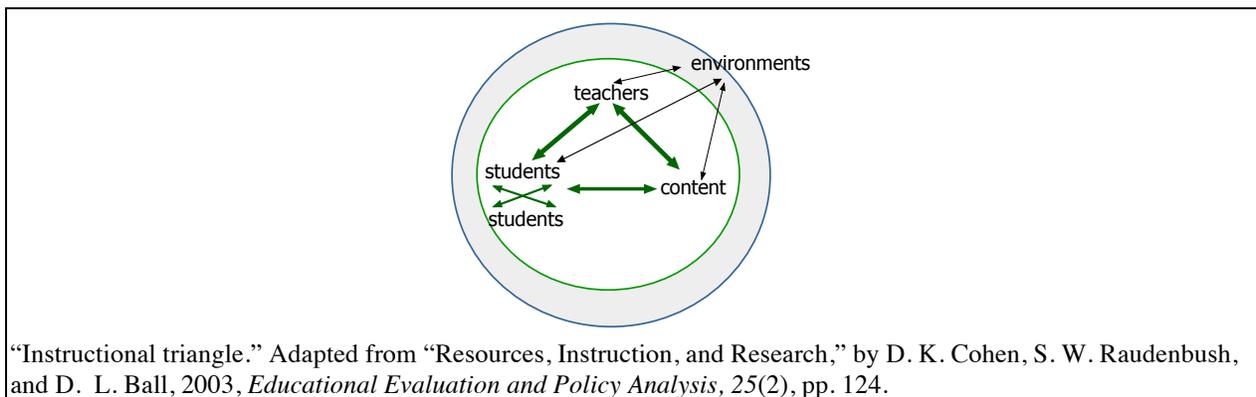
"Instructional triangle." Adapted from "Resources, Instruction, and Research," by D. K. Cohen, S. W. Raudenbush, and D. L. Ball, 2003, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 25*(2), pp. 124.

Figure 3.1. *Teaching as Interaction: "Instructional Triangle."*

As I suggested in Chapter 1, one way these complex classroom interactions may be "activated" and made visible is through teachers' *persona work*. Therefore, in the third stage of analysis I used this model of the "instructional triangle" to map possible intersections between teachers' *persona work* and dimensions of classroom interaction. Specifically, I considered how teachers' *persona work* might play a role in influencing dynamic classroom interactions between (a) teachers and children, (b) teachers and content, (c) children and content, and (d) all these dimensions and the broader classroom environment.

This interpretative lens helped illuminate purposes for teachers' *persona work*. It also helped me to think about how teachers' *persona work* might create obstacles in classroom interactions and thus impede teachers' instructional and relational work more broadly.

Mapping* persona work *onto the instructional triangle. To uncover the purposes of and obstacles created by teachers' *persona work*, I carried out several iterative sub-stages of analysis. First, I mapped the list of common expressive "bundles", which emerged in the previous analytic stage, onto the instructional triangle. I considered how each "bundle" of *persona work* might be used to facilitate (a) interactions between children and content; (b) interactions between teachers and children; (c) interactions between children and the larger classroom environment; and (d) teachers' own interactions with the content. Doing this helped me see the multiple ways teachers used *persona work* relationally or instructionally and what these different moves had in common. It also helped me observe when teachers' *persona work* was not as effective in facilitating connections between specific vertices of the instructional triangle.

From this analytic work, I generated a list of possible purposes for *persona work* using the interpretative lens of the instructional triangle. I then used constant comparison analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to refine them and collapse similar purposes. The initial list of purposes for *persona work* that emerged from this work was extensive. Among other things, it included the diverse purposes of "balancing batches of children," "engaging students," "clarifying content," and "managing classroom space."

Next, I compared this emergent list of purposes with how teachers and children themselves talked about the purposes for *persona work* (which had emerged in the previous stages of analysis and are mentioned in Tables 3.3 and Table 3.4). I also considered how children specifically cited moments teachers' *persona work impeded* their learning or engagement. From this work, I generated a set of umbrella codes pertaining to the purposes of *persona work*, such

as "managing relationships" or "managing reactions." I considered what these purposes had in common, and used these codes to inform the analysis I present later related to the intersections between teachers' *persona work* and the ideas of "control," "connection," and "regard."

<div align="center">

Limitations and Challenges of this Study

</div>

Given the conceptual-analytic nature of this study, it has several limitations and challenges. Specifically, I describe four categories of limitations and challenges inherent to this study related to (a) its conceptual frame and goals, (b) its design and methods, (c) my role as researcher, and (d) how I chose to communicate these findings.

Limitations of Conceptual Frame and Goals

The first limitation relates to the study's goals and conceptual framework. In Chapter 1, I made assertions about the prevalence and centrality of *persona work* in interpersonal interaction. However, to fully explore the relationship between *persona work*, teachers' instructional and relational goals, and classroom interaction, I would need to embark on analysis that is much larger in scale and that would consider potential mediating factors on classroom interaction more deeply and systematically than I do here. For example, to make stronger claims about connections between how teachers' differentially use *persona work*, how children interpret it, and the intersectional identities of teachers and children, I would need to observe many more interactions between teachers and children, and explore how they engage separately and together in different "repertoires of practice" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). I would also need to refine my ideas about how *persona work* and its interpretations (such as through Philipsen's (2015) "speech codes" I alluded to in Chapter 2) might be "raced" or "gendered," or whether this is even possible to discern or parse.

Similarly, to make firmer claims about the relationship between *persona work* and teachers' instructional goals, I would need to more systematically describe the instructional content and its demands, provide closer illustrations of teachers' content-specific practices and how they compare, and incorporate some descriptions and measurements of children's learning and understanding. In other words, I would need to carry out a more nuanced, situated exploration of how "identity" and "difference" potentially mediate *persona work* than I was able to accomplish here.

In general, as this study stands, its early conceptual and empirical claims are useful for illuminating the complexity of *persona work* and for pointing researchers toward broad considerations that might be important related to this construct. However, its claims are impressionistic and exploratory only, and should not be reified.

Limitations of Study Design and Method

This study was also limited in its design and method. I made specific decisions in my study related to what constituted a classroom "case" in terms of context and identity and experience of teachers and children. However, this also brought with it some challenges. First, the sample of classroom cases this study investigated was constrained. The study looked only at White, female, middle class teachers and their expressive interactions with diverse groups of children in middle school classrooms. I made these design decisions intentionally and, as I argued above, they were appropriate for my research goals. However, bounding the research context and participants in this way also means my claims should not be taken to be representative of all teachers, children, and teaching contexts. Further, there was some danger that the specific characteristics of each case (e.g., race, experience) might lead me to make deterministic assumptions about culture, identity, or context. Therefore, I took care to think in nuanced ways about what each of these categories were and were not able to illuminate in relation to my research questions.

Second, the sample of classroom cases in this study is uneven in terms of classroom representation across different schools. This potentially affected the kinds of claims I could make about how *persona work* was mediated by identity and context. For example, I was unable to make larger comparisons between the *persona work* of teachers in the two schools and its relation to the broader school contexts, given that Ms. Voss was the only teacher at West Learning Academy participating in this study. Also, I did not have enough data to consider systematically how the broader school context impacted children's perceptions about their teachers' *persona work*.

Another limitation of my study design related to my data collection timeline. By the time I visited these classrooms, teachers and children had solidified many relationships and routines. Further, as I will describe in Chapter 6, many children already had entrenched views about teachers and their *persona work*. Future research would do well to explore the function and effects of teachers' *persona work* at the beginning of the school year or over a longer period to

gain a better understanding of how it might change over time, or about how children's impressions of teachers' *persona work* might develop.

Finally, I faced a major challenge in my analysis, related to the fact that my findings reflect only what I could literally "see" in the data. This dissertation drew on classroom observation that, when possible, included video footage of teachers and children. It also included interviews with children and teachers, and surveys with children. However, not every child opted to participate in focus groups, and at times not all children completed surveys (although most did). Additionally, in many cases I needed to ensure that at least several children were off-camera, due to permission issues. This meant I did not always have the full picture, especially in relation to children's perceptions of and reactions to teachers.

Further, even in cases when I could see most children on classroom video, I faced an additional problem of interpretation. For example, I needed to consider slippery questions related to what it *looked* like when children were "engaged" or "excited," or what it meant that children might be themselves doing something that was expressively different than their peers (e.g., putting their head down). I raise this point to stress that my interpretations of these data are impressionistic and limited, and also that these data and accompanying interpretations should not be assumed to be representative of all teachers, children, or classrooms.

Challenges Inherent in my Own Role as Researcher

My own intersectional identity as a White middle class woman likely also interfered with my study. For example, my identity might have both limited or helped to facilitate generative exchanges with participants. It is possible that the teachers might have felt more comfortable with me because of the shared aspects of our identities, and thus may have revealed things to me that they otherwise would not have. Similarly, it is possible my former role as a middle school ELA and social studies teacher also led teachers to view me more sympathetically. It is also possible that teachers saw me as an outsider, and were wary of saying or doing certain things around me in ways I did not realize at the time.

Likewise, it is unclear how my identity shaped my interactions with children. I do not know, for example, how much my race or gender may have led children to communicate or mask perceptions about their teachers when engaging with me, or if these specific facets of my identity were even important to them at all. As I mentioned earlier, sometimes children indicated they felt freer telling me things because, as one said, I "wasn't a teacher." It may be, therefore, that there

are other aspects of my identity beyond gender, race, or class that also influenced my relationships with children (or with teachers) in terms of what they were willing to share with me.

It is also possible that in my interactions with teachers and children my *own* persona work acted as a mediator. I may have used voice, body language, and so on in ways that helped to encourage and affirm some perspectives (i.e., the teachers') while limiting others. Throughout my data collection and analysis, I continually reflected on how I might be communicating my own biases about teaching, race, gender, and other aspects of identity—or about children in general—through my interactions and *persona work*. To balance my interpretations, I periodically shared data with a senior scholar and with peers to confirm what I was noticing. I also continually grounded my analysis and interpretation in my theoretical frame and in the interpretative lenses presented in the previous section.

Challenges in Communicating Findings

I also faced some unique challenges in terms of describing the findings of this study. I needed to figure out a way to illustrate small examples of teachers' *persona work* in classrooms in the same way a video camera might. I wanted to show how teachers continually used aspects of the physical *self* (e.g., voice or body language) while teaching and its effects on classroom interaction, but in a way that was descriptive and non-judgmental. This presented a challenge, especially as there are not strong models for describing the expressive dimensions of teachers' work in educational research.

In response, I decided to capture expressive instances in what I called "snapshots." These snapshots, which focus on a small moment of *persona work* in single teacher's classrooms, are scattered throughout the following chapter describing teachers' *persona work*. Like a video clip, these snapshots are meant specifically to show what teachers and children *did* expressively. However, unlike video, the snapshots are also meant to eliminate much of noise, drama, and uncertainty inherent in what Brown (1992) termed the "blooming, buzzing confusion" of classrooms, and instead to bring the focus squarely and descriptively on the expressive aspects of teachers' work.

A second challenge I faced in communicating my findings was talking about the teachers themselves in ways that were generous and sympathetic. As will be evident in the following chapters, these teachers—and one in particular—do not consistently come across positively.

There were moments, for example, when they did not appear to use *persona work* justly or equitably, or where their personal orientations and biases about children likewise detrimentally affected their interactions. Yet, I should also clearly state that every teacher in this study was well-intentioned, with a palpable love for students and a true desire to improve her practice.

In Chapter 1, I suggested that some of teachers' *persona work* might emerge instinctively, the product of habit, identity, and experience. I will reiterate that point here. Therefore, while these teachers could describe some of the many ways they used voice, body, and so on in the classroom, they appeared unaware of broader negative patterns in their *persona work*. In the following chapters when I describe aspects of their *persona work* that may have been inequitable or even harmful on children, my intention is not to point out individual shortcomings, but to show the critical role this undeveloped and "invisible" domain of teaching has in shaping classroom interaction.

Looking Ahead

In the next three chapters I present the results of my analysis. Across these chapters, I unpack the idea of *persona work* and explore its demands and its role in the larger work of teaching. I do so from three different perspectives. I begin in Chapter 4 with a detailed look at teachers' *persona work*, using close descriptions of their practice to illustrate its components and purposes. In Chapter 5, I draw on teacher interviews to describe the extent to which teachers' consciously and strategically enacted *persona work*, as well as their purposes for it. Chapter 6 turns to the children. It examines students' perceptions of teachers' *persona work*, and describes ways children said teachers' *persona work* did—and did not—help them learn and engage in classroom interaction.

Chapter 4

UNPACKING *PERSONA WORK* AND ITS PURPOSES

In the preceding chapters, I have argued that individuals continually employ aspects of *self*, such as voice or body, to help them communicate. How they do so impacts what their communication looks and sounds like and how it is interpreted by others. Given that the work of teaching is built on human interaction, it similarly relies on the expressive dimensions of teachers' work. When teachers give directions, when they launch a lesson, when they elicit children's thinking, or when they otherwise engage in instruction, they continually make decisions about where to look, when to move, whether to smile or laugh, how to pitch their voice, and so on. In fact, it is impossible for teachers to avoid using expressive behaviors when interacting with children and around content. As I will describe later in this dissertation (Chapter 6), their resulting *persona work* is highly visible to and influential on children.

As I showed in my review of empirical and theoretical perspectives in Chapter 2, few researchers have examined the connection between teachers' expressive behaviors, their relationships with children, and their instructional efficacy. There is also no existing, shared framework available to guide teachers' moment-to-moment deployment of expressive behaviors. Rather, what this study terms teachers' *persona work* is an example of what Lewis (2007) called "invisible work" in her study of teaching. Because individuals engage aspects of *self* whenever they communicate, the expressive dimensions of human interaction can be hard to see and difficult to study in any context. Therefore, as with the other kinds of "invisible work" Lewis described in her study, *persona work* is "occluded by habits of mind, social structures, cognitive gaps, academic hierarchies, and the busy-ness of classroom life" (p. 178).

This chapter describes and analyzes observational data of teachers' *persona work* to foreground the expressive dimensions of teaching and unpack the role of *persona work* in classroom interaction. Although *persona work* is already visible, this chapter renders it more *discernible* by decomposing it and providing close descriptions of it. Specifically, this chapter argues that participating teachers used *persona work* to help orchestrate interactions between

themselves, the students, the content, and the environment in ways designed to maximize the likelihood children would learn. The chapter also highlights how, at some points, teachers' orchestration of *persona work* appeared unevenly equitable or productive for some or all children. While teachers' *persona work* appeared useful for orchestrating interaction in classrooms in ways that benefitted most children most of the time, teachers' expressive behaviors did not consistently maximize the learning and engagement of *all* children in every instructional moment. Further, in the case of one teachers specifically, her *persona work* appeared to *limit* the learning opportunities for some children—and specifically, for Black boys.

Overview of Chapter

This chapter is the first of three findings chapters to investigate, from different perspectives, the emergent relationship between teachers' *persona work* and teachers' orchestration of conditions of classroom interaction. Specifically, this chapter explores these ideas in relation to observational data from teachers' classrooms. The next two chapters, in contrast, consider the nature and purposes of teachers' *persona work* from the perspectives of the teachers and the children, respectively.

I begin the chapter by describing the participating teachers and their classrooms. I use these descriptions as a launching point for specifying the components of teachers' *persona work*. The first section of this chapter shows that despite each teacher's unique personality and "typical" instructional demeanor, all teachers used a common set of expressive behaviors in their *persona work*. This section also describes how the teachers sometimes used expressive behaviors in comparable bundles and at comparable times, which resulted in moments when their *persona work* looked similar across teachers and appeared to function in the same way. By showing what teachers' *persona work* entailed, findings in this section illuminate important similarities within teachers' *persona work* despite broader differences in their expressive demeanors, preferences, or patterns.

I use this first section to frame my analysis of the purposes of teachers' *persona work*. In the section that follows, I then show how teachers typically deployed similar aspects of *persona work* for comparable purposes. Specifically, I show how their expressive behaviors helped them orchestrate the dynamic interactions depicted in the "instructional triangle" (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003) to maximize children's learning. For example, the teachers used *persona work* to

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help them engage children in the content, manage relationships, hide personal emotions that were less productive for instruction, and otherwise control, shape, and influence interactional conditions in the classroom related to the *self,* the children, the content, and the broader environment.

I end this chapter by showing ways teachers' *persona work* did not always appear to orchestrate classroom interaction productively for all children. I do so by first describing minor disruptions in the coherence of teachers' expressive behaviors and in the alignment and responsiveness of their *persona work* to children. Then, I describe how one teacher in particular engaged in *persona work* in a way that was inequitable for some children. I use these examples to show how expressive disruptions in teachers' *persona work* might cause teachers' orchestration over classroom interaction to temporarily falter. I also show how consistent problems in teachers' creation and use of *persona work* might perpetuate uneven opportunities for some or all children.

To help the reader navigate this chapter, Figure 4.1 presents a conceptual map that shows its main sections and how they work together.
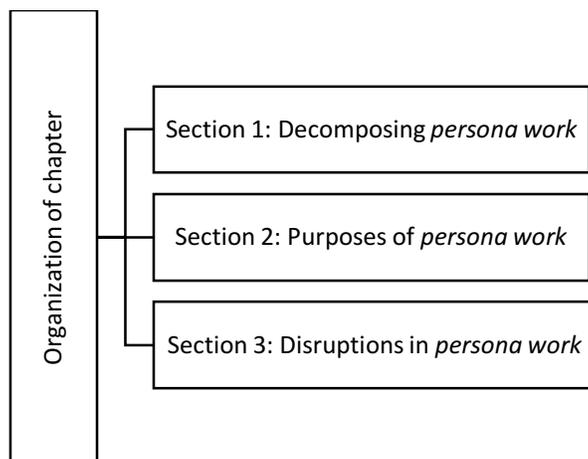
Figure 4.1. *Conceptual map, Chapter 4 ("Unpacking* Persona Work *and its Purposes").*

Decomposing *Persona Work*

The participating teachers all appeared somewhat different from one another in terms of their "typical" expressive demeanor and communication preferences. However, many aspects of their *persona work* were also comparable, regardless of these differences. In the sections that follow I describe these findings. First, I describe the teachers and classrooms themselves and offer broad illustrations of participating teachers' expressive demeanors and approaches. Next, I

show how the teachers' *persona work* also had some similarities. I do so by (a) naming the constituent parts of their *persona work*, and (b) describing similar bundles of expressive behaviors teachers used in their *persona work*. The aim of this section is to spotlight important parallels across participating teachers' *persona work*, and thus to frame my later argument related to its purposes. To orient the reader, see Figure 4.2 for a conceptual map of the main ideas of this section.
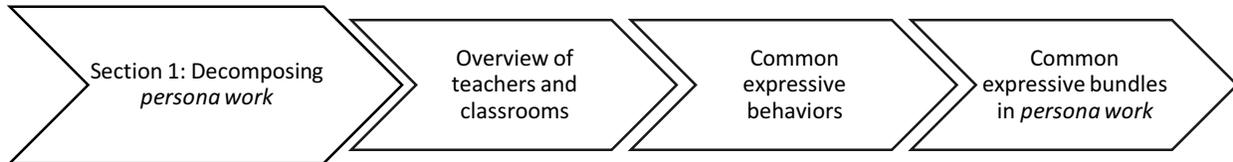
Figure 4.2. *Conceptual map, Section 1* ("*Decomposing* Persona Work").

Illustrations of Classrooms and Teachers

Before looking across teachers' *persona work* and considering its components and purposes, this section provides more detail about the participating classrooms and teachers. These illustrations are intended to better situate the examinations of the teachers' *persona work* that occur later in the chapter. They offer a general overview of each classroom and provide broad description of how each teacher commonly looked and sounded when engaging with children. It is important to note that these illustrations do not provide much information about the teachers' experiences, identities, and philosophies of teaching. This information will be offered in Chapter 5, which looks at teachers' own conceptions of their *persona work*.

In total, there were eight participating classrooms and six teachers (Ms. Williams and Ms. Martin each taught two different classes observed as part of this study). The classrooms were grades six, seven, and eight. They included English language arts (ELA) or social studies instruction or a combination of the two. Children in each class were diverse racially and in terms of gender. For an overview of each classroom's characteristics, see Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Classroom characteristics

	Teacher	School	Grade	Subject	Total Students (n)	Children of Color (%)		White (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
						Student Demographics				
						Total	Black[5]			
1	Ms. Williams, Class 1	Apple Creek	6	Social Studies	32	75% (n=24)	63% (n=20)	25% (n=8)	62% (n=19)	38% (n=13)
2	Ms. Williams, Class 2	Apple Creek	6	Social Studies	30	67% (n=20)	50% (n=15)	33% (n=10)	60% (n=18)	40% (n=12)
3	Ms. Voss	West Learning Academy	6	ELA & Social Studies	28	64% (n=18)	50% (n=14)	36% (n=10)	36% (n=10)	64% (n=18)
4	Ms. Martin, Class 1	Apple Creek	7	ELA	27	57% (n=16)	39% (n=11)	43% (n=12)	57% (n=16)	43% (n=12)
5	Ms. Martin, Class 2	Apple Creek	7	ELA	33	58% (n=19)	48% (n=16)	42% (n=14)	48% (n=16)	52% (n=17)
6	Ms. Lombardi	Apple Creek	7	ELA	15	80% (n=12)	67% (n=10)	20% (n=3)	53% (n=8)	47% (n=7)
7	Ms. Eichner	Apple Creek	8	ELA	25	57% (n=18)	33% (n=12)	43% (n=7)	43% (n=12)	57% (n=13)
8	Ms. Reid	Apple Creek	8	ELA & Social Studies	30	57% (n=17)	33% (n=10)	43% (n=13)	43% (n=13)	57% (n=17)

Ms. Voss. Ms. Voss' sixth-grade class took place during a three-hour block, beginning before lunch and ending just after. She taught children a combination of English language arts and social studies. Typically, Ms. Voss engaged children in a discussion in the first half of class, and in the second half the children worked in small groups or independently while Ms. Voss circulated among them. At the time of the study, Ms. Voss and her students were working on a poetry unit, and children were also engaged in discussions and projects related to topics from current events.

Ms. Voss was both playful and insistent, with high expectations for children that she communicated through a combination of toughness and regard. She often made her voice

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[5] This table provides demographic information related to the number of children specifically identifying as Black and White within each classroom. The reason for this is that patterns related to teachers' *persona work* emerged in relation to these two groups of children, and are described in this chapter and the following two chapters of this dissertation. Therefore, I thought it would be helpful to feature a demographic comparison between Black and White students.

humorous and bright, but she was quick to correct children or to call them out when they failed to comply with her demands or with the classroom norms. Her smiles and laughter came often, but also quickly. They flashed in and out of existence in a matter of seconds before she assumed her more typical stoical expression, which seemed to give nothing away. During whole class instruction, Ms. Voss commonly taught from a high stool at the front of the room. When children worked independently or in small groups, however, she meandered throughout the classroom, lingering at children's desks for long periods, often in an intimate crouched position, as she elicited children's thinking about whatever it was they were doing.

Ms. Lombardi. Because Ms. Lombardi taught seventh grade ELA in a literacy intervention program for students identified as reading below grade level, the structure of her class looked different than that of the other participating teachers' classrooms. Each of Ms. Lombardi's classes lasted approximately two hours, and housed half the number of children as were in the other classrooms. In the class observed as part of this study, for example, there were only 15 children, compared to the more typical 30 students in other teachers' classrooms. Ms. Lombardi's classroom was also one of the least racially diverse in the study. Of her students, 80% were children of color and, of these, most were Black.

On a typical class day, Ms. Lombardi led the children in a short mini-lesson about a literacy topic. She then had children rotate through instructional "centers" for the remainder of the two-hour session. These included computer, independent reading, independent writing, and small group work with the teacher. This meant that for most of the class, Ms. Lombardi sat at a table in the front of the room and worked with groups in a guided reading session. Much of Ms. Lombardi's *persona work*, therefore, was confined to a single location in the room and within a small group context.

Ms. Lombardi often spoke in a low, slow voice. Like Ms. Voss, her expression was typically steady and inscrutable, but also held similar undercurrents of warmth and humor. Ms. Lombardi often appeared deeply moved by what she taught. She conveyed through her urgent, serious tones and her intense regard for children a strong underlying sense of gravity about the content and about children's work. Her exchanges with children were often characterized by brief encouraging speeches about the subject matter or about children's process and work ethic. In these exchanges, Ms. Lombardi rarely asked her students personal questions, but many children nevertheless openly volunteered details about their lives. Children also liked to tease

and joke with Ms. Lombardi, but she never let their jesting go for long before prompting them in serious tones to resume their work.

Ms. Eichner. Ms. Eichner's eighth grade ELA class met at the end of the day. Ms. Eichner mentioned this could be challenging for getting children to focus and do the work. She felt she needed to "work harder" with them than she did with her other classes to maintain children's interest and attention. At the time of the study, the children had been reading the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. On a typical class day, Ms. Eichner started class by eliciting from children the important themes from the book and discussing them. Children then typically engaged in individual or small group work related to the text, during which time Ms. Eichner allowed them to sit at their desks or in the hallway, or to sprawl out in the front and the corners of the room. Ms. Eichner used that time to catch up with individual children. She moved around the room, checking in with them about their behavior or their work, or helping them to organize their notebooks and ideas. Sometimes, she simply sat next to a child and asked if they could quietly read together.

Children's desks stretched across Ms. Eichner's classroom in straight, forward-facing rows. During whole class instruction, Ms. Eichner typically paced up and down the aisles of the desks as she spoke, sometimes pausing to gently put her hand on or near a child. Other times, Ms. Eichner taught from the corners of the room, typically leaning against the windows or even sitting at her desk. She rarely turned her back to children. The pace of her whole class instruction was fast and relentless, characterized by a constant back-and-forth stream of questions and commentary between herself and the children. She seemed just a little louder and a little faster than Ms. Lombardi or Ms. Voss, her voice more strident and gestures more emphatic.

Ms. Williams. Ms. Williams taught ELA and social studies. This study follows her teaching two different groups of sixth grade social studies classes lasting an hour each. The classes occurred back-to-back in the first and second periods of the school day. A typical day in these classrooms entailed a warm-up activity, in which children independently worked on answering questions from their textbook. It then moved to a whole class review of students' answers and a shared reading of the textbook. Interspersed throughout these classes were also small opportunities for children to work in groups to answer additional questions from the book. At the time of the study, the children were learning about renewable resources.

During class, Ms. Williams was almost always talking or moving. She approached many different children and groupings of desks in a single period to check on their work or answer questions. Unlike Ms. Voss, who lingered at children's desks for extended periods, Ms. Williams engaged with children fleetingly, seemingly always ready to take off again to a new location. Matching the rapidity of her movements, Ms. Williams spoke quickly and with pep in a high, bright voice. She continually and publically praised children for getting started quickly, following directions, or raising their hands to answer a question. During this constant, public narration, she also often voiced her expectations for children's behaviors. For example, she repeatedly reminded them where to place supplies or how she wanted them to sit.

Ms. Reid. Ms. Reid taught a combination of ELA and social studies to eighth graders. The class under observation occurred mid-afternoon. At the time of this study, the children were reading and writing about the book *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Typically, the children had time each class period to work independently and in groups. Nearly every day, Ms. Reid also engaged them in some form of discussion about their independent work.

During whole class instruction, Ms. Reid stayed close to the front of the room. When students worked independently, however, she moved around the room frequently and was often difficult to track. She typically crouched beside children's desks, joined small groups of children working in the hallway, or sometimes even positioned herself at her own desk to engage in more private conversations with individuals. In general, Ms. Reid smiled or laughed more often than some of the other teachers. She often spoke in light, almost conversational tones, and commonly praised children, teased them, and asked them questions about the instructional content and about their lives outside of school.

Ms. Martin. Ms. Martin was often calm and unflappable in her interactions with children. When engaging with the whole class, she seemed relaxed and unhurried. She tolerated frequent talking and movement from the children as she lightly explained an idea to the group or led a discussion, and sometimes she interrupted her own instruction to engage with individual students in brief, teasing asides or to laugh at one of their jokes. She rarely appeared angry, frustrated, or harried. However, she also did not often seem excited or joyful. Instead, her talk and movement were generally even-keeled, and almost casual. Only when getting children's attention or correcting a child did she appear to lose something of her relaxed style and adopt a

demeanor that felt more businesslike, her tone more clipped and her movements more staccato and pointed.

Two of Ms. Martin's seventh grade ELA classes were observed as part of this study. The first occurred midway through the morning and the second class took place at the very end of the day. At the time of the study, the students in both classrooms had been engaging in group projects about the Civil Rights Movement. Typically, the children had a great deal of choice in Ms. Martin's class in terms of their topic of study, where they worked, and with whom. When they worked in groups, Ms. Martin herself often roamed throughout the room, stopping periodically to engage children in conversations about their work and personal lives.

Common Expressive Behaviors

In general, some of the participating teachers were funnier and others more serious; some moved constantly while others were more still and quiet, some conveyed through their facial expression and voice a sense of warmth, while others adopted a demeanor that was more flat or businesslike. When interacting with children, some of the teachers talked to individuals for long periods in a way that felt serious and intimate, while others did so fleetingly or hardly at all, and teachers varied in the amount of choice they gave children during class. Given that these teachers did not receive any formal training in *persona work*, the expressive dimensions of their teaching were largely informed by personality, habit, and interactional preference, as well as by their previous experiences on the job or in other interpersonal contexts. Thus, the broad differences in their "typical" expressive demeanors and interactional preferences were not surprising.

What *was* surprising were the *similarities* in many aspects of teachers' *persona work*, even given these broader stylistic differences in their expressive preferences and habits. For example, when engaging in *persona work*, each teacher used a common set of expressive behaviors, such as related to voice, body, or physical placement in the classroom. They also sometimes appeared to do so in ways that were expressively comparable, and which helped them achieve similar ends, regardless of broad stylistic, expressive differences among them.

Specifically, when enacting *persona work*, participating teachers used a common repertoire of expressive behaviors. I grouped these expressive behaviors into several categories, which were informed by literature on verbal and nonverbal behaviors in human interaction (e.g., Argyle, 1975; Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2014; Ekman, 1993; Guerrero, DeVito, & Hecht, 1999; Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013; Pease & Pease, 2008) and by my own observations of common

expressive features across teachers' *persona work*. I describe these categories of expressive behaviors in Table 4.2, and below.

Table 4.2
Expressive Behaviors and Behaviors in Teachers' Persona Work

Expressive behaviors	Expressive examples
Intonation and prosody	Speed, repetition, enunciation, exaggeration, volume, pitch, rhythm, etc.
Content and style of talk	*Discourse style*: Question, explanation, revelation, praise, apology, relative directness and indirectness, etc. *Mood*: Humorous, serious, stern, sad, frustrated, informal, excited, demanding etc.
Comportment of face and body	*Mouth:* Smile, frown, grimace, pursed lips, etc. *Gaze and mien:* Eye contact, widening of eyes, eyebrows lifted or furrowed, cheeks sucked in or puffed out, etc. *Head, arms and hands:* Hands in pockets or clasped behind, arms wrapped around waist or at sides, chin up, head cocked to side, etc. *Posture:* Standing straight, leaning, orientation of body, etc.
Movement and placement in the room	*Pattern of movement:* Direction of movement, common "resting spots," frequency of movement, style of walking, etc. *Gesture:* Shrugging, pointing, thumbs up, waving hands around, nodding or shaking head, etc. *Physical relationship to children:* Use of touch, standing near or far from children when teaching, crouching down, sitting adjacent, leaning over children, etc.
Absence of talk or movement	*Silence:* Pausing, turn-taking, absence of talk, "filler" sounds (e.g., "hmm"), self-interruption, etc. *Stillness:* Immobility, abrupt stop and start of movement, gestures frozen in the air, silent stare, etc.

Specifically, common categories of expressive behaviors participating teachers engaged in included:

- *Intonation and prosody:* According to Waller (1932), a teacher's voice "carries the burden of instruction, and it must therefore stay near the center of attention" (p. 226). The teachers in this study continually adjusted the speed, volume, and pitch of their voice, played with word repetition, exaggeration, and enunciation, and manipulated the underlying mood and tone of their talk.

- *Style and content of talk*: It is critical when describing teachers' *persona work* to attend not just to *how* they say things (e.g., intonation and prosody described above) but also to what it is they say. In particular, it is helpful to note any differential patterns in the

content and style of teachers' talk. It may be, for example, that teachers joke with some children and not others, which contributes to the overall expressive demeanor they project in the classroom when engaging with different students.

- *Comportment of face and body*: Participating teachers continually used their body and face during classroom interaction. This category of expressive behavior therefore entails everything from the orientation of teachers' mouth to the positioning of their eyebrows to the ways teachers held their arms and hands during instruction. For example, when listening to children, teachers often adopted an attentive, serious countenance, such as by shaping their mouths into a straight line and gazing directly at children. However, at other moments of instruction, teachers sometimes exaggerated their faces by blowing out their cheeks, widening their eyes until they looked almost comical, or adopting impassive, neutral expressions.

    Similarly, the teachers continually manipulated the orientation and position of their bodies as they taught. For example, at different points in a lesson, teachers would clasp their arms in front of them or behind their backs, hunch forward or stand up straight, tilt their heads to one side or another, nod or lift their chins, and so on. Ms. Voss commonly sat with her right hand raised and palm flat against her cheek, for instance, and Ms. Lombardi typically nodded or tilted her chin far upward as she listened to children speak, her body otherwise still.

- *Movement and placement in the room*: This category includes teachers' movements throughout the larger classroom space and the location of their bodies in relation to children. It includes teachers' gestures, such as a thumbs-up, a wave, or a nod of their head. It also entails the frequency of teachers' travel through the room, their style of movement, and their speed. For example, some teachers appeared to move continually and unconsciously, while others did so less often, but with more purpose.

    In addition to teachers' movement through the classroom, this category of expressive behavior pertains to their placement in the classroom in relation to their students when not moving. For instance, at different moments participating teachers leaned towards or away from children, stood facing them or with backs turned, or placed themselves closer to or further away from different groups of desks. Sometimes teachers stood above children and looked down, while at other points they interacted with children

on the same physical level. In some cases, teachers also used physical contact, such as briefly touching a student's shoulder or desk, when engaging with them.

- *Absence of talk or movement*: An expressive category related to the idea of expressive silence and stillness was also pervasive in the *persona work* of participating teachers. It pertains to teachers' lack of talk or movement—in other words, to what they did *not* do expressively rather than what they did. For example, many teachers paused dramatically between or even in the middle of words, creating bubbles of silence within and around their talk. Many also stilled their bodies or gestures mid-beat, striking exaggerated, frozen poses before resuming their regular movement.

The teachers typically deployed multiple expressive behaviors simultaneously rather than enacting them singly and in isolation. Further, teachers' expressive behaviors often shifted depending on what they were doing, even within a single lesson. Also changeable was the relative dominance of each expressive behavior in teachers' overall *persona work* within and across their teaching. For example, although all teachers typically used voice in *persona work*, at times their talk felt more audible, present, and exaggerated, whereas at other points it seemed to recede into the background and make room for a more dominant physical display. However, even when in a more neutral or muted state, all categories of expressive behaviors were almost always present. Teachers continually used these expressive behaviors and they were, therefore, perpetually visible in teachers' *persona work*.

Common Expressive "Bundles"

At times, teachers' use of expressive behaviors appeared more purposeful, and was similar across instances of instruction and even across teachers. For example, when directing children's attention, all participating teachers typically used more staccato phrasing, silences, and a strong voice while standing still and upright in the center of the room. When listening, the teachers often leaned forward and gazed at children, sometimes not even breaking eye contact until one or two seconds after children finished talking. When redirecting children's attention back to the teacher, these teachers often used a soft, drawling voice that became increasingly louder and crisper as seconds passed. These and other common combinations of expressive behaviors the teachers used in their *persona work* are discussed in the section below. I call them expressive "bundles." Specifically, my analysis shows teachers enacting 21 similar bundles of expressive behaviors in their *persona work*. Each "bundle" is listed in Table 4.3.

Several characteristics held each expressive bundle together in teachers' *persona work*. First, each bundle was characterized by teachers' similar manipulation of combinations of expressive behaviors. This does not mean the teachers did exactly the same thing expressively. Rather, it means teachers used each category of expressive behavior in ways that were analogous and that achieved similar instructional or relational effects. For example, in one expressive bundle, teachers varied the volume, speed, and tone of their voice in ways that always made the underlying mood of teachers' talk seem to grow in intensity. In another expressive bundle, teachers adopted body language and facial expressions that communicated a sense of urgency and implied they could see and hear everything.

Teachers also used each bundle of expressive behaviors at similar times instructionally or relationally. For example, some bundles of expressive behaviors were more likely to emerge when teachers gave directions or when they elicited children's thinking. Other bundles emerged when teachers engaged in comparable kinds of managerial work, such as when they redirected children's behaviors or oversaw transitions in students' activities. Some occurred only among the whole class, whereas others happened when teachers worked with children in many different instructional formations.

Table 4.3

Common Expressive "Bundles" across Teachers' Persona Work

	Expressive "bundle"	Description
1	Echoing	Backing away as children speak, but with body facing the speaker, often accompanied by an exaggerated craning of the neck or pointed eye contact. Occurs when teachers want children to speak up, or when they want other students to attend to the speaker. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
2	Staging	Standing, sitting, or otherwise positioning the body in ways that are oriented toward an object (or child) of interest, generally to draw attention something in the room, some idea, or someone. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
3	Capturing	Common talk pattern when teachers want to capture children's attention and quiet their voices that occurs especially at the start of directions. Characterized by barely audible initial talk, and then a slow increase in teachers' volume and intonation. Often accompanied by a body that is largely still, a focused gaze, and moments of self-interruption and palpable waiting. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
4	Signaling	Emphasizing aspects of the teacher's speech by some sudden exaggeration or manipulation of expressive resources, such as by abruptly stopping or starting speech, freezing mid-stride, coming down louder on syllables of words, and so on. Commonly occurs when teachers want to flag something as important or reengage children's attention, especially if the teacher has already been speaking for some time. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
5	Building	Gradually increasing intensity and speed of talk, often during an explanation, when launching a lesson, or while telling a story, as a way of building momentum and interest. Entails getting increasingly louder, speeding up the voice or speaking in a way that is more rhythmic or song-like. Also includes vocal repetition and rhythm. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
6	Plugging	Repeating words and adding exclamations that praise, or "plug" content, procedures, or ideas, often accompanied by an excited, energetic mien. Often used when initially introducing an idea, or to get children excited about something the teacher deems less interesting. Typically occurs with the whole class and in small groups.
7	Scheduling	Limiting talk, abruptly changing the subject, prescribing the length of time for or pattern of responses, etc., as a way of managing the teacher's time, sustaining the attention of the whole group, and minimizing distractions. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
8	Insisting	Grave, insistent speech directed at children when asking seriously for them to do something or comply with directions. Can be accompanied by a sense of palpable waiting through stillness and silence, terse staccato vocal tones, and a direct gaze. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
9	Disapproving	Clearly displaying a feeling of disapproval or censure of children's actions, such as by frowning, glaring, using censorious or corrective words, or a combination thereof. As with insisting, is also often accompanied by a direct gaze and periods of watching and waiting. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
10	Conducting	Craning the neck, exaggeratedly scanning the room, or otherwise positioning the body in a way that implies the teacher sees and hears everything. Often occurs during transitions, when the teacher must manage multiple children and objects at one time.
11	Leveling	Placing the body on level with (or lower than) children or otherwise apprehending student space in the classroom, such as by sitting at children's desks, crouching beside them, etc. Generally, occurs to facilitate more intimate conversations with children, or to redistribute power dynamics in the classroom. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.

	Expressive "bundle" (continued)	Description (continued)
12	Lightening	Infusing humor or joy into instruction, often with jokes, smiles, or laughter, as a way of interesting children or connecting with them. Often teachers will do so fleetingly, with little change to their expression, and then quickly revert to a more serious tone. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.
13	Recognizing	Publicly acknowledging or otherwise appearing to notice children, such as calling on them, nodding at them, stating their names, praising them, thanking them, and so on. Tends to occur when teachers want to personalize their notice and interest of children within the whole class context, or when teachers want to engage or redirect individuals when interacting with a large group. Most typically occurs with the whole class.
14	Landing	Making direct contact with individual children, or else giving the impression of doing so, such as by touching a child's shoulder or desk, smiling at him, winking, giving him a nod, and so on. Sometimes it is accompanied by words, but not always. Often the intention of landing is to be affirming and, like recognizing, show children they are seen and noticed. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.
15	Reflecting	Appearing to think deeply, such as through furrowing of brow, closing or lowering eyes, tapping finger against temple, etc. Often occurs while or just after children speak or ask a question. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.
16	Attending	Appearing to listen deeply to children, such as by adopting a steady gaze, nodding, holding body frozen while children speak, and so on. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.
17	Masking	Adopting an impassive, stoical expression, often while children are speaking or when asking a question of children. Often an attempt not to "give away" teacher's thoughts or feelings to children. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.
18	Mirroring	Taking on something of a child's demeanor or expressive performance as or just after they share an idea or story, either to show empathy or to save the teacher from needing to respond in any substantive way. Generally characterized by adoption of a similar intonation or expression as the child's, or by repeating key words stated by the child and engaging in prolonged eye contact with the speaker. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.
19	Emoting	Adopting the appearance of being emotionally moved by content or by children's ideas, often characterized by donning a grave expression, speaking in a serious tone, and holding the body still and sometimes bent. Generally, happens when the teacher wants children to find content or ideas important. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.
20	Revealing	Sharing "personal" details about oneself (that may or may not be factual), generally in tones that are informal and casual. Tends to occur when teachers want to make themselves or the instructional content feel more accessible or engaging. Occurs with the whole class, small groups, and in individual interactions.
21	Hurrying	When teachers speed or slow children's individual academic contributions, such as through implied haste, impatience, or leisurely interest. This is often communicated through both physical stance and tone. For example, if teachers want to "hurry" children along in their talk, they might make a quick cyclical gesture. If, in contrast, they want children to feel they have ample time to share, teachers might even lean back or sit on their desks and "get comfortable" as children speak. This is related to "scheduling"— except typically in response to a single child.

These expressive bundles are interesting in themselves, as they foreground diverse examples and aspects of *persona work* in teaching. However, I suggest that these expressive bundles, described in Table 4.3, are also important because of what they communicate about *persona work* more broadly in terms of its larger implications. Specifically, the presence of these common expressive bundles implies that at least some aspects of participating teachers' *persona work* were guided more by what it was teachers wanted to do relationally or instructionally than they were by teachers' personal habit and preference. In other words, because these expressive bundles emerged at similar times and in similar ways regardless of larger differences in teachers' expressive preference or style, it would appear their existence was triggered by commonalities across teachers' professional purpose, by similar contextual constraints and influences in the classroom, or by similarities in how teachers were socialized into the profession. This is described more fully in the next section of this chapter, which argues that teachers used these expressive bundles similarly to help orchestrate common interactional conditions and challenges in their classrooms.

Purposes of *Persona Work*

The previous section showed that teachers similarly used a common set of expressive behaviors in their *persona work* and sometimes even did so in similar ways. This section draws on these findings to consider the purposes of the teachers' *persona work* more broadly and to show how it functioned in the classrooms in this study. To orient the reader to the different parts of this section, Figure 4.3 includes a conceptual map of its main ideas.

Specifically, I argue in this section that teachers engaged in *persona work* around a broad common purpose: orchestrating the conditions of classroom interaction in ways meant to maximize the possibility children might focus, learn, and engage. I describe below what I mean by "orchestration," and then provide specific examples of ways teachers engaged in expressive orchestration through their *persona work*. I organize these examples to loosely coincide with the four central dimensions of classroom interaction highlighted by Cohen, Raudenbush and Ball (Cohen et al., 2003) as the "vertices" in the "instructional triangle." These include ways teachers appeared to use *persona work* to orchestrate interactional conditions pertaining to the classroom environment, the children, the content, and the teachers themselves.
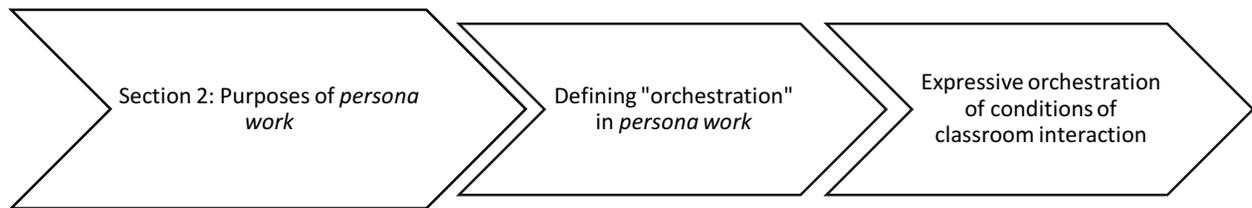
Figure 4.3. *Conceptual map, Section 2 ("Purposes of* Persona Work").

Defining "Orchestration" in *Persona Work*

The work of teaching is characterized by overriding endemic problems. Teachers are tasked with managing multiple children (and groups of children) at once. They must navigate (and help children navigate) the crowds, confusion, and noise of the classroom. Teachers must also engage with batches of students in ways that are productive and positive even when children do not want to be present, but rather are compelled to attend class due to the compulsory nature of schooling. Further, the ways teachers relate to children in the classroom must also facilitate students' learning around content-specific goals, even when children's unique personalities, preferences, and needs differ markedly from one another's and when their interests diverge from the instructional foci. When taken together, teachers' complex instructional charge requires them to "coordinate, stimulate, and shepherd" (Lortie, 1975, p. 155) young people around a specific set of shared activities and to convince children to engage relationally and academically in similar ways and at similar times. How they do so, I argue, largely hinges on the ways in which their *persona work* helps them "orchestrate" these dilemmas and endemic uncertainties in the classroom.

As was described in the first chapter of this dissertation, I choose the term "orchestrate" for several reasons. "Orchestration" has related, for example, to individuals' coordination of diverse activities around a specific goal or end, and thus applies also to teachers' charge of shaping classroom interaction in ways designed to benefit all children. Additionally, "orchestration" is typically defined as being carried out by a single individual, but one's orchestration is also meant to influence multiple other actors. This too mirrors teachers' role as the primary determiner of interactional norms and operations in the classroom and the principal coordinator of multiple children's learning and engagement. Last, I use "orchestrate" because of the word's implicit implication that even the objects or people being orchestrated retain some power to shape the final product or interaction. In other words, although teachers have primary

responsibility to orchestrate classroom interaction, children too have a role in what happens in the classroom, as do the content and contextual variables that might influence learning. Putting these various meanings of "orchestrate" together, I argue that by orchestrating interactional conditions between the environment, the content, the children, and the teachers themselves, teachers essentially synchronize, reconcile, and, ultimately, harmonize disparate (and sometimes conflicting) conditions of classroom interaction in ways designed to help all children learn and engage.

Further, the primary way teachers orchestrate classroom interaction, I argue, is through their *persona work*. Because expressive behaviors underlie and are wrapped around everything teachers do instructionally or relationally, it is ultimately through these expressive dimensions that teachers do anything at all in the classroom. In other words, teachers' *persona work* is the means through which they engage in orchestration. As I will show below, for example, teachers' expressive behaviors provided metaphorical versions of what Jackson (1990, p. 13) called "traffic signs, whistles, and other regulatory devices." Their *persona work* signaled to children what they should be doing, thinking, or feeling. It helped flag critical aspects of the content, inspired enthusiasm and excitement in children, helped teachers model different behaviors and attitudes, allowed teachers to mask undesirable instinctive emotions, and helped teachers communicate their regard for children.

As Lortie argued (1975), "The self of the teacher, his very personality, is deeply engaged in classroom work; the self must be used and disciplined as a tool necessary for achieving results and earning work gratifications" (p. 156). Because teachers' *persona work* was omnipresent and highly visible, teachers likewise used it as a tool for orchestrating the equally pervasive uncertainties of classroom interaction. Their *persona work* was for teaching what the conductor's baton is for shaping and orchestrating the sounds of a musical ensemble. As this and the remaining chapters of the study will show, teachers' *persona work* was often useful for facilitating their orchestration of classroom interaction in ways that were productive for children. However, teachers were not always successful in this regard.

Expressive Orchestration of Conditions of Classroom Interaction

I have argued that teachers use *persona work* to help orchestrate conditions of classroom interactions in ways meant to maximize the likelihood children will learn and engage. In this section, I provide specific examples of how they did so. These examples loosely fall into four

categories related to the central dimensions of classroom interaction: expressive orchestration over environmental conditions, over interactional conditions related to the content, over the students, and over the teachers themselves. For a description of each condition of expressive "orchestration" and what it entailed, see Table 4.4. The table also gives an overview of how the "expressive bundles" (listed earlier in this chapter) relate to these interactional conditions.

Table 4.4

Conditions of Orchestration over Classroom Interaction in Persona Work

Condition	What it entails	Expressive bundles
Expressive orchestration over environment	a. *Orchestrating time and space*: Orchestrating when children must start and stop, where they work, and the rules for physical and social engagement inside different spaces in the classroom b. *Orchestrating resources*: Orchestrating who gets what (e.g., supplies) and when c. *Orchestrating norms and procedures for communication and interaction*: Orchestrating what is okay and what is taboo, what counts as "appropriate" or "funny" in the class, etc. d. *Orchestrating children's bodies within the classroom space*: Orchestrating how children can sit and stand and move, their dress, their gaze, what they can touch, their distance from one another and the teacher, their specific positioning inside the classroom, etc.	Scheduling Insisting Capturing Disapproving Conducting
Expressive orchestration over children	a. *Orchestrating children's minds, attention, and interest*: Orchestrating what children should pay attention to; managing and influencing their mood, motivation and levels of joy and interest b. *Orchestrating connection*: Helping children feel seen and heard, and thus orchestrating children's emotional connection to the teacher and class	Echoing Staging Lightening Building Leveling Landing
Expressive orchestration over content	a. *Orchestrating key ideas*: Orchestrating what counts as epistemologically important, orchestrating how children engage in the discipline through different activity structures b. *Orchestrating participation*: Orchestrating whose ideas are elicited and when (and who is ignored), who gets to ask a question (and who doesn't), and, in general, the extent to which children are taken seriously and can participate in (and influence) the intellectual space c. *Orchestrating evaluation*: Orchestrating the nature of teachers' evaluation and praise of children (public/private) and the criteria for such evaluation and praise; orchestrating the degree to which children are insulated from evaluation, judgment, and praise	Signaling Plugging Recognizing Hurrying
Expressive orchestration over teacher (i.e., the "self")	a. *Orchestrating personal distance*: Managing the personal distance and relational proximity between teachers and children; orchestrating the impact of teachers' distinctive personalities, experiences, biases, and preferences on children and content b. *Orchestrating personal reactions and behaviors*: Masking and exaggerating teachers' own instinctive or habitual responses or behaviors	Reflecting Attending Masking Mirroring Revealing Emoting

Before launching into a more detailed description of ways teachers' *persona work* helped orchestrate these different interactional conditions, I include one important note about the writing in the remainder of the chapter. It can be difficult to visualize the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice and how they work together, given that until now little research has sought to describe them in any detail or illustrate the connection between teachers' expressive behaviors and other aspects of teaching. Therefore, this chapter includes what I am calling "snapshots" as a writing tool for helping the reader to visualize what teachers' *persona work* looked like and entailed. The snapshots provide close illustrations of small, situated instances of teachers' *persona work*. They showcase how teachers' expressive behaviors intersected with specific instructional and relational contexts and demands and how children reacted to them. The snapshots intentionally feature different classrooms, as well as purposefully provide diverse descriptions of what "orchestration" looked like across participating teachers' *persona work*. They are not meant to reify any one type of expressive orchestration. Rather, the purpose of the snapshots is primarily illustrative, and they should be read as complementary rather than central to my analysis.

In general, in the remainder of this section I describe ways teachers used *persona work* to orchestrate the different conditions of classroom interaction. In these descriptions, I provide examples through one or more snapshots, and I also show how different expressive bundles (described earlier in this chapter) might be associated with different interactional conditions. It is important to note, however, that although the ways teachers orchestrated classroom interaction through their *persona work* are purposefully divided below in relation to these interactional conditions, these categories should be understood as dynamic. Just as teachers, children, content, and the environment continually influence and shape one another in classrooms, teachers' expressive orchestration of each condition was also often fluid. For example, when teachers used voice or body language to influence conditions primarily related to the children's attention, they likewise impacted conditions related to the academic content.

Using *persona work* to orchestrate interactions around the environment. When managing classroom interaction, teachers need to coordinate groups of children around common instructional and relational purposes, often within small, crowded, noisy spaces. This entails exerting influence over working conditions and social interaction in classrooms to prevent distraction, disturbance, and harm and to channel the potentially frenetic movement and energy

of the classroom. Teachers might, for example, implement norms and routines for communication and behavior within different spaces in the classroom. They might help children know when to start and stop work (and provide additional time markers in between). Teachers might also manage children's physical navigation of the classroom environment or the distribution and use of classroom resources.

Although all these examples related to orchestrating interactions within the classroom environment are all, in themselves, critical facets of teaching, they also all rely on teachers' *persona work*. To communicate expectations about and manage the time, space, and resources of the classroom, for example, teachers must necessarily use verbal and nonverbal behaviors. For example, teachers might model through their physical comportment, facial expression, and choice of words and intonation different norms for communicating inside disparate classroom spaces. Likewise, they might position themselves in specific locations throughout the classroom in ways meant to be strategic and that are designed to help them manage and oversee transitions and movement throughout the room. Teachers might also specify verbally and nonverbally how they want children to sit, move around the room, talk to one another, and otherwise physically engage within the classroom space. All these examples were evident in participating teachers' *persona work*.

Snapshot A, below, shows how one of the teachers in this study, Ms. Reid, used her expressive behaviors to help orchestrate environmental conditions and direct children's bodies within the broader classroom space. In the first half of the snapshot, Ms. Reid used her expressive behaviors to signal for children that the norms for communication and work were changing. In the second half of the snapshot, she then used her *persona work* to model what she wanted children to themselves do expressively.

In small groups, the eighth-grade children in Ms. Reid's class have read a chapter in Frederick Douglass' autobiography and planned a presentation for the class based on the chapter content. The children spent the first half of class finalizing their work, and are about to take turns presenting their findings to the larger group.

"Okay!" Ms. Reid says loudly, walking from the side of the room where her desk sits to the front and center of the classroom. A group of three girls already gathers behind her, smiling and looking at their notecards as they wait to present. The remaining children are spread in a "U" shape throughout the room, clustered together at groups of desks. They continue talking loudly.

Not yelling but in a voice that carries, Ms. Reid says, "I need everybody to face this way"—she pauses briefly and gestures towards herself largely— "with their Chromebooks closed." Then she waits, ramrod straight in the exact center of the room. She turns her head one direction and another, seeming to look down at children as they continue to talk and work, albeit more quietly.

After several seconds, Ms. Reid speaks once more. Her voice is quieter. "Ladies and gentlemen, facing forward, Chromebooks closed so I know that you are giving full attention"—and she pauses again as she looks pointedly at several children— "to your presenters." She waits again silently, and the children too continue to grow quieter. Her eyes visibly dart back and forth and she continues to turn her head to one side and then another. Otherwise, Ms. Reid is frozen, her shoulders squared off and facing forward.

When Ms. Reid again talks, she is almost murmuring, her tones warm and soft. "All right, Chromebooks all the way closed so it's not too tempting to open them up." With the word "tempting" she smiles slightly at a few children. Nearly all are still and silent now, and many children look at her expectantly. Nevertheless, Ms. Reid waits several seconds longer, continuing to gaze at different children.

Finally, when she speaks again, Ms. Reid is loud once more. Her tone is bright and business-like as she calls out, "All right, so! For the first group, we have Amanda, Steven, and Sarah!"

Although Ms. Reid still makes eye contact with children, her body is much looser and more relaxed as she talks. She even seems to sway slightly from side to side in time with her words. After a brief, gentle pause, she looks around the room and, smiling, says, "Please be respectful. My expectation is that you give them your full attention so you are understanding the book as we go along." Another pause builds before she continues. Then, in a voice that is almost casual and has warm undercurrents, she gives the children her remaining directions. When she finishes, she backs up, grabs a chair at a child's empty desk, and sits down.

"Go ahead!" she calls out, grinning. Her body is pointed forward, expectantly. She crosses her hands in front of her and waits for the presenters to begin. Many children do the same.

In this snapshot, Ms. Reid began by getting children's attention. She spoke over them, but not loudly. Rather, Ms. Reid played with enunciation and repetition to make herself audible. She varied the crispness and length of her syllables, paused awkwardly between words and vowels, and then repeated herself again and again. Simultaneously, Ms. Reid adjusted her physical

presence in the room so she was highly visible to children, ensuring they both saw and heard her. In response, the children began to notice her and adjusted their own placement within the classroom space and the volume of their words to match hers. Once Ms. Reid felt she gained the attention of most children, she relaxed her voice and body by smiling and speaking in gentler tones. Yet, that relaxation itself appeared strategic, a way to help convince children to follow through on her continued directions: "Please be respectful," she smilingly cajoled them. Then, sitting at one of the students' desks, she further modeled what it was she expected children themselves to do during the pending class presentations.

Throughout this snapshot, the children appeared to follow Ms. Reid's lead. With each shift in her voice or physical presence, the children seemed to adjust their own expressive behaviors in kind, often mirroring Ms. Reid's own tone and movements. For example, most grew quiet when she did; most ceased their movements when Ms. Reid herself stood rigidly still; and many also turned to face the presenters just after she did the same. Much like a conductor's wave of the baton to shape and coordinate the movement and music of the orchestra, Ms. Reid's *persona* guided and synchronized children's verbal and physical engagement within the broader classroom environment.

Expressive "bundles." Snapshot A is far from the only example of how teachers in this study used their expressive behaviors to help orchestrate norms for engagement within the physical classroom environment. In this study, the teachers continually crafted and used *personas* that helped them specify what children ought to be doing and how they ought to interact with one another and inside the broader classroom space in any given moment. As was evident in Snapshot A, through their *persona work* teachers could model rules of engagement or flag for children when the instructional and relational situation (and thus the teachers' expectations for children) changed. Five expressive bundles (originally listed in Table 4.3) primarily correlated with such broader efforts by teachers to orchestrate interactions within the environment through their *persona work*. They are scheduling, insisting, capturing, disapproving, and conducting, and are described below.

Scheduling. One way teachers used their *persona work* was to orchestrate the temporal space of the classroom. This is the expressive bundle of "scheduling." When scheduling, teachers typically communicated to the whole class the time constraints of different intellectual activities or foreshadowed what might happen next through their verbal and nonverbal behaviors. For

example, at one point Ms. Williams narrated the remaining time to children as they worked in groups. "Let's try to finish up in two more minutes," she said. Then, several seconds later, she repeated, "Looks like most of you are finishing up!"

Sometimes when engaging in "scheduling," teachers would also provide temporal reminders and direction in ways that were exclusively nonverbal. For example, Ms. Voss often dramatically gestured toward the clock, and occasionally Ms. Eichner would smilingly tap her index finger against her wrist, as if against an imaginary watch face.

Insisting. The expressive bundle of "insisting" related to moments when participating teachers literally insisted—often through strong repetition of words and phrases—that children engage with one another, the teacher, or the content and the classroom environment in specific ways. Often when "insisting," teachers spoke in a grave voice and repeated words over and over, interspersing moments of stillness and silence between them.

An example of "insisting" is evident in Snapshot A, when Ms. Reid repeatedly asked children to face forward and close their computers. She did so seriously and unrelentingly, each time stressing different words or pausing for different lengths of time. Only when the entire class complied did she cease "insisting"—such as by moving forward in her talk, breaking eye contact, and relaxing her posture—and launched the next part of her directions.

Similarly, at the start of each class, Ms. Williams regularly "insisted" to children how they ought to sit, what they ought to do, and even what they should be thinking about. For example, during one warm up activity she repeated, "Are you writing? You should be sitting and writing. Time to write, and you should be thinking many important things about what to write!" As she talked, Ms. Williams also looked pointedly at different children, many of whom were *not*, in fact, writing. She occasionally even mimed the work of writing herself, donning an exaggerated mask of concentration and gesturing with her right hand as if it were a pen.

Capturing. When "capturing," teachers wrangled the attention of children in contexts when children were typically speaking loudly or moving about the room. "Capturing" typically occurred at the start of class when children were settling in or when teachers transitioned from group or partner work to whole class instruction. The expressive work of "capturing" was highly recognizable through teachers' gradual but compelling increase in volume and the palpable sense that teachers waited for children to see them and comply with teachers' directions. The

expressive bundle of "capturing" is evident in Snapshot A, such as when Ms. Reid first grabbed the attention of the group through her *persona work*.

Another common characteristic of "capturing" relates to the "throw-away" talk that many teachers often engaged in when they launched this expressive bundle. It was as if, at the start of "capturing," the teachers recognized children would be too loud and distracted themselves to hear teachers' actual words. Therefore, teachers often did not say anything especially important about the content in their first moments of "capturing." On one such occasion, for example, Ms. Martin stood stock still in the center of the room and said intensely to children, "I am about to tell you something. You are going to look at me and I will tell you something important. In a minute I will tell you something." It wasn't until most children ceased their conversations and stilled their bodies, however, that she actually told them what she foreshadowed here as she started with "capturing."

Disapproving. When engaging in the bundle of *persona work* I call "disapproving," participating teachers used verbal and nonverbal behaviors to flag and redirect children's behavior. This expressive bundle was typically characterized by a quick, intense look toward a child, a frown or shake of the head, or a quick raise of the eyebrows and intense flash of the pupils. In response, children quickly ceased doing whatever it was they were doing, even when no actual words were spoken to them by the teacher. In this way, teachers' *persona work* helped them control the social environment and norms of the classroom.

For example, while facilitating a whole class discussion, Ms. Voss continually scanned the room and made eye contact with children. Occasionally, when she wanted students to sit up straighter in their chairs, she herself mimed sitting straight and tall, and then squinted at her eyes and stared at the children in question until they did so themselves. Likewise, when she noticed unpermitted side conversations between children, she made a fast, chopping motion which her hand and shook her head very slightly, her brows furrowed. In response to this "disapproving," the children immediately stopped talking and faced forward.

Conducting. Another way teachers used *persona work* to help orchestrate interactions related to the classroom environment was by engaging expressive behaviors in ways that gave the impression teachers saw and heard everything. This is "conducting." Here, teachers exaggeratedly monitored children's use and distribution of classroom supplies or children's interactions within different spaces of the classroom. They did so by often standing very straight

in the center of the classroom and systematically and dramatically scanning the room. They squinted their eyes and often even seemed to look "down their noses" at children, as if scrutinizing children's behavior for errors.

In general, while "conducting," teachers conveyed a feeling of extreme watchfulness over classroom spaces and resources—and, specifically, over the children as they operated within and around those spaces. "Conducting," in fact, was something many of the teachers themselves implicitly referred to when talking about their own expressive behaviors. As will be evident in Chapter 5, Ms. Lombardi and Ms. Voss referenced the importance of "scanning" one's audience and otherwise being present and visible to children, especially during transitions. Doing so, they indicated, helped teachers monitor (and correct) children's engagement within the broader classroom environment, and was useful for physically reminding students what they ought to be doing in any given moment.

Orchestrating interactional conditions related to the children. In crowded classrooms, children are inundated with talk, images, movement, and countless other forms of stimulation that, taken together, can make it hard to know what to look at and when. The participating teachers in this study appeared to accommodate for this by shaping and guiding children's attention and focus, just as they guided children's physical bodies (see above). Specifically, they orchestrated conditions of classroom interaction in ways designed to excite and fascinate children and influence their mood and motivation. They also used verbal and nonverbal behaviors to help children know where to look and to what they should attend in relation to the content, different physical spaces in the room, or one another.

In Snapshot B, below, Ms. Voss used her voice and body to help draw and maintain children's attention to the subject matter. This is one example of how teachers used their *persona work* to help orchestrate children's engagement and focus.

Snapshot B: Orchestration of children's engagement through rhythm and momentum—Ms. Voss

Ms. Voss launches a poetry lesson. Speaking slowly, with careful, drawling emphasis, she says,

So, we're going to be using those *deep* words and phrases that resonate

from the *inside* [pause], *deeply* [pause],

not the words that are just on the surface [pause].

As she talks, Ms. Voss walks unhurriedly to the center of the room. Once she arrives, she stands with her body still and upright, continuing in a strong voice,

I want you to think about those *things* that you *dream* [pause],

those *things* you *believe* in [pause],

those *things* you *hear*

inside your *head*—

Then Ms. Voss leans forward and softens her tone. "Have you ever—you know how at *night*, when you're laying down and you're getting ready to go to sleep, and all of a sudden you've got somebody talking to you and you realize it's you?" she asks.

The children have been watching her quietly. Earlier, many had their hands in their laps with eyes facing down, rested their chins on their fists, or leaned way back in their chairs. But with these words, some look up. As if in response to their collective gaze, Ms. Voss' voice increases in volume and speed.

"You've got all these busy words spinning around your head," says. She is smiling now, and many children are too. They sit straighter in their chairs, and some have even begun to nod or have their thumbs up in agreement. Others have started whispering their own stories to one another.

Ms. Voss keeps talking, looking at each child in turn, her words even louder now and her smile wide. Rhythmically, she says,

You think *this* [pause],

You want to know about *this* [pause],

You are worried about *that* [pause],

Whatever these things are going on [pause],

Or it might be something you *read* about and it's just going through your *head* [pause],

Or a *song* [pause],

or *something* [long pause].

Those are the *deep* things that we're trying to get to.

When she finishes, children's voices audibly buzz throughout the room and many hands wave in the air. Hardly seeming to stop to breathe, Ms. Voss cranes her neck and calls on a child in the very back. "Maurice?" she asks, and with that the children are vying to share their own stories.

In this snapshot, Ms. Voss deployed intonation and gesture, along with rhythm and silence to encourage children's excitement and coordinate their interest around a single topic: the

task of writing a poem about themselves. To do so, she used words in a way that was almost song-like. Her voice had a clear rhythm, evidenced by the frequent, lengthy pauses that seemed to lend a sense of anticipation to her talk. She also repeated key words and ideas, almost as if they were a musical refrain, and she did so in a way that built in intensity and momentum. Her expressive presentation appeared to have a strong effect on her students. It not only appeared to help wrangle their attention and excitement around a single aspect of the subject matter, but also encouraged them to talk and participate. For example, Ms. Voss was hardly finished speaking when children began to volunteer their own ideas and wave their hands in the air.

Expressive "bundles." There are many ways the teachers in this study used their *persona work* to orchestrate conditions related to children's attention and interest. They used diverse expressive moves, such as those described above, to foster a sense of engagement and momentum and to inspire connection between children and the ideas shared by their classmates or teachers. Examples of specific expressive bundles that helped teachers do so are described below. They include building, staging, echoing, lightening, leveling, and landing.

Building. One way many teachers typically used expressive behaviors to inspire and maintain children's interest and attention is through the expressive bundle called "building." "Building" typically occurred when teachers first launched a lesson, or in moments when teachers needed children to carry over the energy of a lesson into their independent work. As they engaged in this aspect of *persona work*, teachers' words almost became magnetic, drawing students' attention to key aspects of the content and inspiring increasing levels of interest and excitement from children. Snapshot B above related to Ms. Voss' poetry launch is a good example of "building." She grew louder and more intense in her performance as the snapshot went on, and the energy underlying her words also seemed to increase, or to "build," as she talked.

Staging. A second way participating teachers orchestrated children's attention was by providing direction around children's physical gaze. For example, in one bundle of *persona work* enacted by many teachers that I call "staging," participating teachers used expressive behaviors to, essentially, "stage" different parts of the classroom by foregrounding and deemphasizing aspects of the classroom space. They literally pointed at different locations, moving towards or away from different areas of the room, or stood directly beside objects and visuals they deemed important, all in an effort to draw children's gaze. For example, in Snapshot C below, Ms.

Martin initially did not appear to engage in "staging," and as a result it seemed children were not sure where to look or to what they should attend. However, at the end of the snapshot she changed her physical positioning dramatically in a way that immediately drew the eye and directed children's gaze toward the board.

While "staging," teachers often held their bodies in ways that were especially exaggerated, awkward, or unusual. For example, Ms. Eichner often froze mid-stride and gestured or jutted her chin towards different areas of the room in a way that often felt dramatic and even silly. Yet, because of the sheer awkwardness of her physical positioning, she successfully convinced many children to look in the direction she indicated through her body language. In other words, by adopting physical positions or movements that felt strange or unexpected, the teachers appeared to further compel children's physical gaze toward the object or area of interest in question, and away from other parts of the room (or from other children) that teachers wanted to deemphasize.

Echoing. Many participating teachers also engaged in the expressive bundle called "echoing" to help direct children's attention and focus. Sometimes when these teachers wanted to direct students' gaze to a certain area in the room, they would slowly walk backwards, *away* from the object of their attention. They would gradually, deliberately place one foot behind the other, moving slowly backward until their backs were completely flush with the opposite wall. By walking away from the object of interest while simultaneously looking at it exaggeratedly and pointedly, participating teachers often encouraged children to do the same. For example, Ms. Eichner and Ms. Williams often used "echoing" to get children to look at the board at the front of the classroom.

Participating teachers also engaged in "echoing" during class discussions. In such cases, their physical positioning helped direct children's attention not to a specific object, but rather to another child as he or she spoke. For example, after a few seconds into the child's comment, many of teachers would slowly step backwards, their eyes nevertheless glued to the speaker, chin often raised in an exaggerated position of attention. Interestingly, even Ms. Lombardi engaged in this version of "echoing" despite typically sitting during instruction. She did so by leaning far back in her chair as children talked. In response, the children in her group often looked not at her, but at the speaker. In general, when teachers engaged in "echoing" during class discussions, it also often had the effect of encouraging the child who was talking to use a louder voice—

likely because the teachers moved away from children as they spoke, and the students, in response, wanted to make sure they were still heard.

Lightening. Another way participating teachers appeared to use *persona work* to encourage children's curiosity, help them focus, sustain their interest, or otherwise orchestrate interactional conditions that contributed to their engagement and attention was through the expressive bundle called "lightening." Here, teachers used laughter, humor, and other joyful displays to connect with not just individual children but with the class more broadly, and therefore to foster higher levels of engagement. For example, Ms. Martin and Ms. Eichner often paused to laugh at children's jokes, Ms. Lombardi and Ms. Voss commonly teased individual children gently during instruction, and Ms. Reid and Ms. Williams frequently made fun of themselves. As will be described in Chapter 6, for many children in this study, teachers' humor, gentle teasing and capacity to laugh was a powerful tool for helping students feel noticed and comfortable, and for ultimately keeping them interested and engaged in what was happening in the classroom.

Leveling. The expressive bundle of "leveling" was characterized by moments when teachers placed their bodies at the same physical level as one or more children. For example, as they moved throughout the room, Ms. Reid, Ms. Williams, and Ms. Voss consistently crouched down next to children's desks to quickly engage with them. "Leveling" also entailed moments when teachers positioned themselves inside spaces that typically belonged to students, such as by sitting at children's desks. This was evident in the first snapshot, when at its close Ms. Reid sat down in a child's desk to listen to students' presentations. Ms. Eichner also often sat in children's desks, especially when conferencing with individual students. By placing themselves on children's physical level—and sometimes within children's own spaces (e.g., their desks)—the teachers seemed to be positioning themselves, in that moment, as children's equal. In other words, "leveling" appeared to be an effort to connect and empower.

Landing. A final way teachers used *persona work* to orchestrate children's focus, engagement and connection was through the expressive bundle of "landing." When "landing," teachers engaged in some physical contact—or near contact—with children. For example, teachers acknowledged children by touching their desks or shoulders, or they sometimes made pointed eye contact with children. For instance, as she led class discussions, Ms. Voss often reached out her hands to touch the shoulder of one child, or she smiled or winked at another. In

another example, Ms. Martin commonly touched children's desks or books as she walked past their desks. When engaging in "landing," teachers seemed to want to connect and personalize instruction for children, even inside what Jackson (1990) called the "crowds" of the classroom.

Orchestrating interactional conditions related to the content. Participating teachers also appeared to use *persona work* to orchestrate conditions related to the instructional content. Part of this work entailed using expressive behaviors in ways already described above, such as by drawing children's attention to the subject matter, or by inspiring and sustaining children's interest in the lesson and one another's ideas. Additionally, participating teachers used their expressive behaviors to signal something about the relative *importance* of different aspects of the content or in relation to how children engaged with it. Their expressive behaviors also more generally helped create (and limit) academic opportunities for students. For example, through their *persona work* teachers emphasized the most important ideas so that children would also notice them. They also used verbal and nonverbal expressive behaviors to facilitate and manage children's participation around the subject matter and to evaluate children's contributions.

Snapshot C (below), which takes place in Ms. Martin's classroom, provides one small example of how teachers used *persona work* to orchestrate children's reception and notice of the academic content.

Snapshot C: Orchestration of content through (de)emphasis of main ideas—Ms. Martin

Ms. Martin begins telling children how she wants them to complete an assignment. Her tone is chatty and informal, her body loose and oriented slightly away from the children. She says,

> So, what you're going to do, you can work with a partner, you can either read it silently to yourselves, you can read it out loud—whatever works for you or your partner. You're going to get a pink piece of paper, you can use the back and the front if you need to, or multiple sheets. And you're going to get some sticky notes, I don't have a huge amount so I don't want you to take more than you need…

Her directions come out like a stream of thought, each step she describes blending into the next. As she talks, she wanders around the front of the room and digs around in piles of supplies on her desk or a nearby chair. Her voice grows louder and softer and more and less audible as she moves around, looking this way and that, but in general her tone is relatively monotonous.

In response, children begin speaking to one another in loud whispers. Others have launched their work without waiting to hear the rest of her directions and advice. Several children stand up or wander across the room. Seeing this, Ms. Martin freezes. She then quickly moves back to the center of the room, facing her body squarely outward, toward the children.

"I feel like I just talked a lot here," Ms. Martin says, and smiles slightly.

Then, loudly and more sharply, she repeats her directions and explanations, this time shortening and pausing between each step. Her tone is lower now, more "businesslike." Her body is still and upright and her face is stern. In response, the children too freeze their bodies, and their conversations grow more muted. Many look at her, and many appear now to follow along as she speaks.

In Snapshot C, Ms. Martin initially does not appear to use expressive behaviors in a way that helped children know what was most important about the subject matter. In other words, her *persona work* failed to orchestrate interactional conditions in a way that drew children's attention to the content and helped them learn. When she first spoke, her words instead ran into one another and she rarely paused. As a result, few ideas stood out as significant, and her explanation and directions were difficult to follow. In fact, this snapshot shows how many children did not appear to track on Ms. Martin's words at all. It was as if Ms. Martin's explanation was not "landing" for them. Nothing she said felt urgent or important; rather her directions came across as vague and unclear.

However, when Ms. Martin appeared to register the disconnect between her explanation and children's responses toward the end of the snapshot, she shifted her expressive performance. She immediately moved to a more visible place in the room and turned to face the children. She also slowed her talk dramatically, lingering on particular words or ideas and adjusting her volume and intonation as she spoke in ways that were more clear and compelling. The result was immediate. At once, it was clearer what she was asking children to do, and many children immediately looked up and began following along. Snapshot C is a clear example of how teachers might through their *persona work* help orchestrate the ways in which children viewed, understood, and responded to the subject matter—for better or for worse.

Expressive "bundles." I highlight four different bundles of expressive behaviors that Ms. Martin and other teachers in this study commonly used to orchestrate interactional conditions related to the content. The first, "signaling," relates directly to Ms. Martin's *persona work* described in Snapshot C. The other bundles provide additional varied examples. Together, these bundles include signaling, plugging, recognizing, and hurrying.

Signaling. "Signaling" occurred when teachers abruptly changed the way they used expressive behaviors, often in conjunction with one another. It often entailed quick, simultaneous changes in teachers' tone, physical stance, and expression, which "signaled" a departure from how teachers had performed these expressive elements even moments before. When "signaling,"

an unexpected shift in teachers' expressive display often seemed to make teachers more visible and audible. This is apparent in Snapshot C above. Likewise, Ms. Reid "signaled" in Snapshot A, although she did so also through her *absence* of talk and movement. Still, as with Ms. Martin, Ms. Reid's "signaling" appeared to draw children's attention to what she said.

Plugging. Teachers commonly used verbal and nonverbal behaviors to communicate what they thought was important or worthy about the subject matter—and to convince children to find it important also. This is evident, for example, in the bundle of *persona work* I call "plugging." Here, teachers spoke enthusiastically and often personally about the content, incorporating many exclamatory phrases and positive descriptors. When engaging in this aspect of *persona work*, Ms. Eichner told her students, "This was my *favorite* thing to do as a kid!" Ms. Martin similarly said to her students, "I am so excited about this book. I *love* this book and I know *you* will love this book!"

The teachers also engaged in "plugging" by talking in ways that were graver than normal, rather than by speaking more excitedly or enthusiastically. When introducing a new idea, for instance, Ms. Lombardi often framed the content very seriously, saying things like, "This is *really* important. You *have* to *know* this." In general, when using "plugging" as part of their *persona work*, teachers emphasized through their verbal and nonverbal expressive behaviors the importance of different facets of the subject matter. It was a way of "selling" the content to children.

Recognizing. Teachers also used *persona work* to orchestrate interactions related to the content in a very different way. They revealed through their expressive behaviors their opinion of children's ideas. Their *persona work* was, in other words, a subtle evaluative tool. This is the expressive bundle of "recognizing."

Sometimes when "recognizing," teachers sustained steady eye contact with children as students shared their thinking, while also nodding slowly, as if to affirm students' ideas. Occasionally, teachers also provided specific feedback and praise immediately after children spoke, such as "Yes!" or "Good job!" At other points, they merely gave children a big smile or nod as they talked. In contrast, there were also ways, such as in Snapshots H and I below, in which teachers failed to recognize children expressively, or failed to do so in positive ways. For example, teachers sometimes raised their eyebrows sardonically at something children said,

changed the subject, or otherwise used verbal and nonverbal expressive behaviors to discredit, devalue, or ignore children's contributions. This will be revisited later in the chapter.

Hurrying. Teachers also appeared to use *persona work* to orchestrate children's engagement with the content by managing the length and opportunity for children's participation. This is the expressive bundle of "hurrying." When engaging in "hurrying," some teachers, like Ms. Williams, allowed limited "airspace" for children to talk publicly in class— and when "airspace" did occur for children, the students were sometimes rushed in their contributions by teachers' expressive behaviors. (This is evident in Snapshot I, below.) For example, teachers might make a "wrap it up" gesture with their hands.

Often teachers engaged in the hastening aspects of "hurrying" not because they were not interested in individual children's contributions, but rather because they were sensitive to larger issues of timing within the whole class. For example, during whole class discussion, teachers commonly "hastened" individual voices when children spoke for too long or went off-track. "Remember what we're talking about and then we'll come back to you," Ms. Voss once said to a student who began to answer a different question than what was originally posed of him partially through his response. In another example, Ms. Reid said to a child who had already talked for a lengthy period, "Wrap it up," mindful of the multiple other hands in the air. In some cases, however, teachers' enactment of "hurrying" was inequitable or controlling, especially when teachers consistently hastened the contributions of the same children or groups of children. This will be also revisited later in the chapter.

Orchestrating interactional conditions associated with the teacher (i.e., the *self*). Given the relational close quarters and emotionally exhausting nature of classroom life, teachers need to monitor and regulate their own instinctive expressions, emotions, and reactions to ensure they are behaving and responding to students in ways that are situationally appropriate and aligned with their professional roles and responsibilities. According to Waller (1932), teachers "must know how to control the impact of their personalities upon students (and the impact of students' personalities upon themselves)" (p. 283). In other words, not everything the teacher does, feels, or believes, and not every instinctive response the teacher has to children is likely to be equally instructionally or relationally productive or appropriate. Teaching is thus what Hochschild (2003) terms *emotional labor*, wherein teachers must regulate their own emotions

and feelings in order to engage appropriately with and effectively influence their clientele—namely, their students.

I argue, therefore, that a final way teachers use *persona work* is to help orchestrate interactions related to the management of the *self*. There were two major ways teachers did so. First, teachers used expressive behaviors to mitigate, mask, or manage instinctive emotional reactions and responses to children or content. Second, they continually appeared to make decisions about what to disclose or withhold about themselves to manage the personal distance between themselves and their students. Examples of these are provided in the two snapshots below (respectively) and further elaborated in the descriptions that follow of related expressive bundles.

Snapshot D: Orchestration of emotion and response—Ms. Lombardi

Ms. Lombardi works with a group of three seventh-graders on a lesson meant to ready them for state testing in a few weeks. She sits on one side of a table, her back against the wall. On the other side are the three children. Two of the children, a Hispanic boy named Greg and a Black girl named Jada, lean over their notebooks. The third, a Black boy named Sean, sits further back, his pencil loose in his hand.

As she talks to the group about the subject matter, Ms. Lombardi's voice is low and measured. But when Jada, Greg, and Sean make a joke, or when they give right answer, Ms. Lombardi lights up and flashes a smile. Then her face immediately resumes its stoic, grave expression.

Typically, as children speak, Ms. Lombardi leans forward or far back in her chair and looks directly at them. She furrows her brow as she listens, appearing to think deeply about what they have to say. Often when they finish speaking she also pauses for a moment or two, her gaze still on them. Then, imitating children's own tones, she'll say, "Hmm, good," or "Interesting idea," or "That's something to think about."

At one point, Jada veers off-track and begins to talk negatively of one of her teachers. Ms. Lombardi continues to gaze at her until Jada finishes, and then says, "If you're not tempted to ask a question in somebody else's class because you're worried about them getting an attitude, you have to find another way to still get the question asked." Her expression remains impassive and difficult to read.

Jada persists: "But she *always* gets an attitude no matter what I do, so what do you think?"

Ms. Lombardi responds by looking at her very seriously, nodding, and saying "Hmm." Then Ms. Lombardi immediately changes the subject, adopting a brighter tone. "Let's see what you all have for the next question," she says.

Jada shrugs, and smiles, and the group moves on.

In Snapshot D, Ms. Lombardi communicated a sense of gravity and regard through her expressive behaviors. She seemed often be listening intently to what children had to say and to think deeply about their words. Yet rarely did Ms. Lombardi contribute her own opinion, and when she did, it happened briefly. She then redirected children's attention back to the work. It was hard to know whether Ms. Lombardi was impatient, tired, annoyed, or excited. Rather, she engaged expressively in the same steady, methodical way with every child in the group. Even when Jada asked her directly for her personal opinion, Ms. Lombardi refrained from revealing anything about her own beliefs or emotions. Instead, she provided Jada with a serious—and yet noncommittal—response and redirected the conversation. When Jada persisted, Ms. Lombardi changed the subject. In this snapshot, Ms. Lombardi appeared to use *persona work* in ways meant to manage and control her own emotions and opinions, and thus to orchestrate conditions of classroom interaction related to the *self*.

The next snapshot provides a different example of how participating teachers engaged in *persona work* as a way of helping them orchestrate classroom interactions revolving around the *self*. Specifically, it shows how Ms. Eichner leveraged details about her life to support her instructional purpose. Whereas the previous snapshot showed how Ms. Lombardi likely masked or omitted some personal emotions or reactions and adopted a neutral, impassive outward demeanor, Snapshot E shows how Ms. Eichner strategically inserted and elaborated "personal" details about herself to augment her instruction.

Snapshot E: Orchestration of personal disclosure—Ms. Eichner

Partway through giving directions to children about a writing assignment related to news headlines, Ms. Eichner tells a story. "The other day," she says, "I was watching one of those entertainment news shows. And they kept giving this *headline* for this snippet that they were going to do on a "*Fish* that Hit a *Kid*," a '*Fish* that Hit a *Kid*, the "*Fish* that Hit the *Kid*."

She speaks quickly, casually.

"I'm watching and watching, as if I don't have a thousand other things to do," she says, "but I'm *so* curious."

There is a little humor underlying her tone, a sense of self-deprecation, and a hint of a smile. Although Ms. Eichner has continued to pace the room as she speaks, she occasionally stops to throw out her arms or shake her head as she talks. Many of the children, meanwhile, follow her with their eyes.

At the climax of her story, she says, "The fish that a man caught is lying there on the dock, and a little boy is leaning over it." She is holding both arms in front of her, as if clutching a large, heavy fish, the top half of

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her body tilted forward with the imaginary weight. But her eyes still scan her students. She continues, "Fishy, fishy," in the high, sweet voice of a child. Then she stands up quickly and lifts her shoulders.

"You know how sometimes a fish—it's not dead but it's struggling because it's out of the water, and then it'll *flop*?" she says. She pauses, and then quickly, laughingly, goes on. "It *flops*, hits the kid in the face, and the kid falls back. That's the whole point. And I watched this whole long boring show on this newscast because it had a strong headline."

Ms. Eichner, at the story's culmination, had stopped her movement. However, as soon as it ends she resumes her pacing, quickly crossing across the front of the room to the other corner, and then back through the aisles. Her tone again is serious, all hint of smile gone. She tells the children, "There are times we miss information because the headline is poor." Then she pauses, and moves towards the board. "So. [Pause.] I have a headline for you guys."

The children continue watching her silently as she launches into directions.

In Snapshot E, Ms. Eichner described how she watched an entire newscast because of one headline she felt was compelling. She used the story of her experience as fodder for capturing children's attention and connecting them to the lesson content. Yet, she later revealed, "There was no show, and definitely no headline. I just thought they needed something to sink their teeth into." What Ms. Eichner's comment uncovered was her purposeful manipulation—and, in this case, her fabrication— of "personal" details for the sake of instruction. Ms. Eichner largely made up a story about herself and inserted it into instruction to engage and connect with children. As was evident in this snapshot, she also did so in a way that was expressively compelling and believable, her *persona work* full of emotion and drama. In so doing, she intentionally deployed "personal" details to orchestrate closer connections between the children and the content, and, conceivably, to make herself more relatable to students.

Expressive "bundles." The final set of expressive bundles related to teachers' expressive orchestration of classroom interaction centering on the *self* is diverse. First, it includes expressive behaviors tied to the ways teachers concealed personal emotion and reactions. Second, this category of *persona work* also relates to ways teachers purposefully fabricated or manipulated personal stories and inserted them *into* instruction, such as occurred in Snapshot E. Taken together, these expressive bundles include masking, reflecting, attending, mirroring, revealing, and emoting.

Masking. One way participating teachers manipulated aspects of the *self* to inspire and maintain productive classroom interactions was by suppressing or hiding instinctive emotions

they deemed less useful instructionally or relationally. This is the expressive bundle of "masking." For example, the teachers in this study sometimes reported being frustrated with children, tired, or overwhelmed. Yet, they rarely yelled or cried, and these emotions were rarely apparent to children. One day, for example, Ms. Lombardi said she had been crying nonstop just before the children arrived, upset about something that had happened that morning. Yet, her sadness was impossible to discern in her expressive behaviors during class. The only observable difference in her *persona work* was that, at the start of class, she appeared to laugh and smile *more* than normal, rather than less, because, as she reported later, she was "over-compensating."

Likewise, in some cases teachers rarely volunteered their own opinions about the substance of what children shared, so as not to impact or shape children's thinking with their own beliefs and values. Rather, teachers were often relatively stoical when engaging with children or facilitating a discussion among them. This was evident in Ms. Lombardi's even tones and impassive expression in the snapshot above. In another example, Ms. Voss often sat still and silent when leading a discussion, her expression rarely changing as different children spoke. When using "masking" in these ways, teachers gave nothing away about what they thought of children's comments, or about their feelings for children more generally. Thus, they freed children from their "personal" influence or censure by masking their own ideas and responses to children's contributions.

Attending and mirroring. Often, it appeared that teachers listened to children deeply and interestedly, no matter what. They communicated their interest and care for what children said through intent, grave body language and facial expressions, or with warm gestures, nods, or small sounds of affirmation. This aspect of *persona work* relates to the two associated expressive bundles of "attending" and "mirroring."

When engaging in "attending," teachers appeared to listen deeply and interestedly to children as they spoke. Sometimes they would nod slowly, and in other moments they would cock their head inquiringly, as if encouraging children to continue. When "attending," as with "masking," teachers also often seemed to hide their own instinctive reactions or emotions. For example, as will be described in the next chapter, both Ms. Reid and Ms. Williams spoke of how they tried to always appear interested in what children had to say even when they felt the content of children's talk was boring or did not make sense. By adopting interested and encouraging

expressions while "attending," teachers could also communicate their regard for children's ideas—even when they did not in fact feel it.

Relatedly, the expressive bundle of "mirroring" also relates to how teachers appeared to listen and respond to children's talk. Among these teachers, this bundle entailed mimicking (or "mirroring") children's tone, words, or body language after students spoke. For example, after child in Ms. Voss' classroom shared a story that ended with "I was so surprised," Ms. Voss repeated the child's words— "You were surprised"—using the same whispered tone and adopting a similar facial expression as the child wore.

When "mirroring," participating teachers typically echoed back children's own words or demeanors rather than overlaying their own ideas or manner into the interactional space. This bundle seemed to help teachers acknowledge children's utterances—i.e., by repeating children's words back to them—without substantially responding to those comments. The teachers in this study, for example, especially seemed to use this expressive bundle in moments when children voiced a personal opinion or belief that the teachers did *not* want to comment directly on, or when children communicated an idea about which the teacher wanted to remain neutral.

Reflecting and emoting. There were occasions when teachers seemed to perform or exaggerate some deep emotional engagement not just with children's ideas, but also in relation to the academic content. Such was the case when they engaged in the expressive bundles of "reflecting" and "emoting."

"Reflecting" pertains to moments when these teachers appeared to think deeply about something. It could occur after a child made a point, or even during one of the teachers' instructional explanations. For example, on one occasion when Ms. Reid spoke to students about famous speeches, she said, "What is it that makes a speech good? There are so *many* things. Let me think about what affects me most"—and as she said, "let me think," she literally seemed to do so. Her eyes became unfocused, she cocked her head to the side, and she emitted a "hmm" sound. In this and other examples of "reflecting," it seemed the teachers' purpose was to model for children what the work of thinking looked like, and to flag when children too ought to be similarly engaging in deep thought.

Relatedly, while "emoting," teachers would appear viscerally moved by what they taught. For example, when speaking of serious topics, Ms. Lombardi often closed her eyes for a moment and said something like, "This is really important." Likewise, Ms. Eichner sometimes engaged in

"emoting" after asking children a discussion question, as if to underscore the importance of her prompt. On one such occasion she said, "Does this remind you of anything in your own lives? I bet you have some *powerful* things to say about this." As she spoke, Ms. Eichner also appeared grave and made careful eye contact with multiple children, as if to draw them in to the discussion.

An important note about both "emoting" and "reflecting" was that teachers did not always actually feel what they purported to when performing in these aspects of *persona work*. In fact, at least in some cases it seemed likely that teachers used "reflecting" and "emoting" when they were *uninterested* by the content or *unmoved* by children's words or ideas. For example, Ms. Martin said, "When we're doing something like test prep, I try to look really interested to help them focus." For her, in other words, "emoting" was a way to mask her true feelings of boredom and disinterest in the subject matter that day.

Revealing. In addition to controlling their emotional reactions when engaging with children, participating teachers also controlled the personal information they provided to children about their own experiences, orientations, and personalities. They commonly shared small details about their weekends, their families, and their likes and dislikes, just as Ms. Eichner did in the snapshot above. These personal disclosures seemed to be techniques for making the content more interesting and accessible to children, and for rendering the teachers themselves more likeable or "human." However, not everything the teachers revealed as "personal" was, in fact, true. Many of the teachers admitted to exaggerating details in their "personal" lives or fabricating them entirely because they felt such "personal" stories—regardless of their veracity—would be useful instructionally or for connecting with children.

Based on children's observable reactions to teacher's stories (described in Chapter 6), participating teachers' "personal" revelations did indeed appear to have some positive impact on children's interest and engagement. When participating teachers mentioned something "personal" about themselves, for example, many children would look up or sit a little straighter at their desks. Sometimes children would also be more likely to raise their hands to share after such revelations. In fact, after engaging in such "personal" revelations with children, the teachers sometimes had to quickly and firmly refocus students, such as with a sharp word or gesture, because children were, seemingly, *too* excited by teachers' "revealing." After one such "personal" story, for example, Ms. Eichner had to quickly quiet children's excited response to

her revelation by saying, "Okay! Okay! I'm glad that was interesting to you but now we need to get back and focus."

Disruptions in *Persona Work*

There were many similarities in the ways teachers used expressive behaviors and in their apparent purposes for *persona work*. Specifically, teachers' *persona work* appeared useful for helping them to orchestrate conditions of classroom interaction. It helped them maintain children's attention, draw attention to different aspects of the content, manipulate time and the classroom space, and manage their own feelings and responses to better connect with and control children. In general, the teachers' *persona work* helped them shape, control, manage, influence, and otherwise orchestrate different interactional conditions related to themselves, the students, the content, and the larger environment.

However, as will be described in this section and the next two chapters, the ways teachers used *persona work* to orchestrate classroom interaction was not always successful or productive for all children, all the time. At times, for example, teachers' *persona work* did not seem expressively coherent, and thus appeared not to have the effect of engaging children in the content, connecting students to the teacher or one another, hiding or exaggerating teachers' own emotions, or otherwise carrying out teachers' intended expressive orchestration. In other moments, teachers' *persona work* seemed misaligned with the needs of some or all children or appeared inauthentic or inequitable. I call these "disruptions" in *persona work*.

In the section below, I describe expressive disruptions. Often, I argue, they resulted only in momentary lapses in teachers' expressive orchestration of classroom interaction. However, I also argue that when such disruptions were more sustained or consistent in teachers' expressive practice, they had more lasting detrimental effects on some children. I therefore use this section to argue that it is not only the ubiquity of teachers' *persona work* and its shaping power over classroom interaction that is significant. I also draw on these data to suggest that the *nature* of teachers' expressive orchestration is also likely critical. To guide the reader through the main ideas of this final section, Figure 4.4 offers a conceptual map.
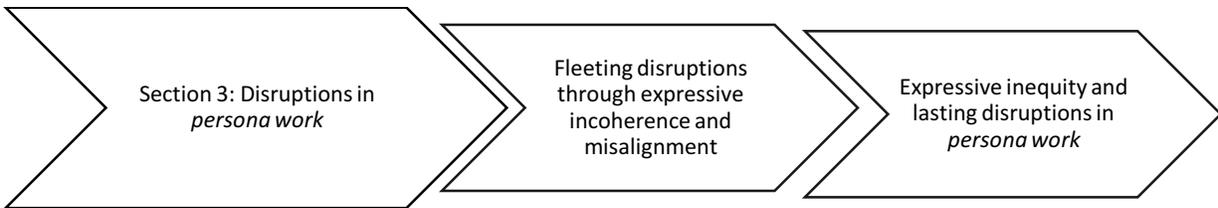
Figure 4.4. *Conceptual map, Section 3 ("Disruptions in* Persona Work*").*

Fleeting Disruptions through Expressive Incoherence and Misalignment

Often, the teachers' *persona work* felt consistent and reasoned. Teachers were many times predictable in their use of different combinations, or "bundles," of expressive behaviors to help them bring about different instructional and relational purposes, such as those described above. Yet, this was not always the case. At other times the participating teachers struggled to control or manage some expressive behaviors. Sometimes too, one aspect of their *persona work* seemed to convey a different message than the rest of their expressive performance. In other words, their *persona work* was expressively "incoherent." At other points, teachers' *persona work* did not appear to connect with some or all children or did not appear responsive to them, resulting in some expressive "misalignment." These disruptions are described in more detail below.

Expressive incoherence. Although a participating teacher's voice might sound cheerful and relaxed, her posture might be tense; and although a teacher might smile at and praise children, her tone may be cutting and her eyes hard. This is evident in Snapshot F below, featuring Ms. Lombardi. Here, Ms. Lombardi tried to reengage with her small group after becoming distracted by other children in the room. Yet, when she did so, she continued to use the same loud, hard voice she had just deployed when correcting the behavior of the other students. Expressive incoherence resulted, and the children in Ms. Lombardi's group did not immediately resume their work as a result.

Snapshot F: Disruption in orchestration: Expressive dissonance—Ms. Lombardi

Periodically, Ms. Lombardi gazes over the heads of the small group of children in front of her towards a handful of girls, all of whom are Black. The girls are talking at desks in the middle of the classroom.

"Ladies," she says in a hard, loud voice. "Make sure we're working hard, not hardly working." Ms. Lombardi's expression is stern and she nods her head very slowly as she waits for them to stop talking. "I'm having trouble focusing up here."

After a brief pause, she again addresses the girls. She says in a slightly gentler tone, "Hey, tomorrow, we'll have more time to work on that, so don't worry. You can ask more questions when I'm not in the middle of teaching." Yet, Ms. Lombardi continues to watch them pointedly, her lips pursed and her eyes squinted slightly.

Meanwhile, the children in her small group wait silently, darting fleeting glances toward the girls being corrected. Ms. Lombardi does not shift her gaze back to look at them, as her eyes are still trained on the girls. But after another moment, she addresses the group all the same.

She says, "Okay guys, you're at number two, let's go." Her voice is still somewhat loud and hard, her tone very different from earlier in the class period. It is almost as if she is not talking to the children in front of her at all. Then, "Number two," she repeats as the group does nothing. Yet, despite her repetition, Ms. Lombardi still does not look at the them. She continues to stare over their heads at the girls, whose giggles are more muffled now, punctuated by the low sound of "shushing."

Meanwhile, Ms. Lombardi's small group still has yet to begin their work. Instead, they continue to look between her and the girls. In response, Ms. Lombardi finally looks at them directly, smiles, and lowers her voice. "Okay now," she says softly. "Here we go. Let's get on with number two." In response, the children in Ms. Lombardi's group finally restart their writing.

In the snapshot above, Ms. Lombardi's small group did not immediately resume work despite Ms. Lombardi's repeated direction to do so. Ms. Lombardi kept the same strident, authoritative voice in her directions to the group as she used when correcting the girls' behavior in another part of the room. Therefore, the children in her group seemed to be unsure what to do. This is an example of expressive incoherence: Ms. Lombardi's vocal intonation, the direction of her gaze, and her ramrod posture did not match the intimate group setting, but instead seemed directed toward a very different audience. Until Ms. Lombardi shifted her *persona work* so that it again aligned with the demands of the small group setting, such as by smiling, speaking more softly, and making eye contact, the children in her group did not recommence their work.

Given the dense nature of classroom interaction and the fact that, in any given moment, participating teachers were often interacting with different "batches" of children simultaneously, such momentary lapses of expressive coherence were not unusual across teachers' *persona work*. In fact, children seemed to have a large amount of tolerance and forgiveness for teachers' expressive incoherence. It typically took very little for teachers to recoup their *persona work* and reassert their ability to orchestrate interactions between the children, the content, the environment, or themselves as if nothing had happened. As we saw in Snapshot F above, for example, all Ms. Lombardi needed to do was readjust her *persona work* so that it again felt

appropriate and logical given the small group context. Once she did so, the children resumed working as if no expressive digression had occurred. In fact, minor disruptions of this nature in teachers' *persona work* were not only common, but sometimes even unavoidable. Ms. Lombardi *had* to shift her expressive performance to simultaneously deal with a different batch of children (the girls who were talking in the middle of the room), and this shift inevitably clashed with the very different expressive performance she needed to carry out with the children in front of her.

In another example, Ms. Voss had to quickly shift from the loud, ringing tones she used when speaking to the whole class to ask, softly and sweetly, whether one child was feeling well. Then, once satisfied with the child's response, she shifted again, readopting the strident voice and authoritative body language she had used prior to her aside. However, in that small moment when Ms. Voss engaged with the individual child in a way that was expressively different, a low murmur began in the room. She therefore had to stop and wait until she had everyone's attention before again resuming. In other words, that brief moment of expressive incoherence fleetingly derailed her *persona work* with the whole class.

In addition to having to navigate the expressive incoherence that sometimes emerged from teachers' charge of engaging multiple "batches" of children at once, these teachers also had to navigate expressive incoherence that came from unexpected interruptions. For example, after several minutes into a heartfelt, emotional pep talk for her eighth graders, wherein Ms. Reid cajoled students to give their work their best effort, the phone rang. Ms. Reid immediately shrugged off her expressive performance and quickly shuffled to her desk to answer it in a flat, business-like voice. Then, upon completion of the call, she again moved to the front and center of the room to resume her dramatic performance. Yet, now her talk felt overly emotional, out of place, and not quite as believable. It was expressively at odds with the voice she had used just seconds before on the phone. It took several moments, therefore, for her to reengage children's attention, which (evidenced by side conversations and increasing movement throughout the room) had appeared to wander during the call.

Interestingly, sometimes the dominance of one set of expressive behaviors over others in teachers' *persona work* allowed them to offset this expressive incoherence. For example, in moments when teachers' voices dominated their expressive performance, such as when they used exaggerated and ringing vocal tones to give an explanation or directions, other aspects of their expressive behaviors could strategically recede into the background. While teachers talked in a

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strong voice to the whole class, for example, they might quickly and simultaneously crouch down to gesture something to a child or hastily step out of the classroom and then back again. For example, both Ms. Reid and Ms. Martin backed out of the room in the middle of giving directions in order to engage in quick, silent exchanges with a teacher and a student, respectively. Yet, while doing so they never stopped talking to the class as a whole. If anything, when these teachers were outside their classrooms, their voices grew even louder and more compelling. Their vocal performances thus provided sufficient momentum and distraction to help maintain the attention of the class—even when, for just a moment, the teachers themselves were not even present.

Expressive misalignment. Sometimes, disruptions in teachers' *persona work* seemed to come from misalignment between teachers' expressive behaviors and the needs of some or all children. In such cases, teachers' *persona work* did not appear to appeal to all children equally or influence them in the same ways, regardless of the extent to which teachers' expressive performances seemed coherent or logical. Yet, given the "crowds" of children (Jackson, 1990) and their diverse needs and expectations in classrooms, small expressive misalignments were the norm rather than the exception across these classrooms in teachers' *persona work*. In any given moment, some children were almost always slower to begin their work, slower to laugh in response to a teachers' joke, or slower to answer a question the teacher put to them, or otherwise slower to respond to teachers' expressive overtures or directives.

In Ms. Martin's class, for example, there were always small pockets of children who continued to talk even after Ms. Martin successfully captured the attention of most children through her *persona work*. In Ms. Reid's class, some children were, according to her, more reluctant to share things about themselves than others or slower to respond positively to her personal overtures. It was as if, at these times, teachers' *persona work* was simply less believable or less compelling for some children. As a result, the teachers' capacity to influence, manage, and engage the children seemed to stall, at least fleetingly.

Snapshot G, below, offers a closer illustration of such expressive misalignment. Here, Ms. Eichner elicited a story from one child, Kevin, about a negative online experience he and his father had, in which they experienced racism from another online user. Ms. Eichner asked Kevin many questions about what happened and tried to convey an attitude of sympathy and gravity in response to his story. Yet, her emotional performance did not seem to resonate with some of the

children present. Specifically, Kevin himself was initially reluctant to respond to her questions, and another child, Darius, seemed to challenge her expressive display.

Snapshot G: Disruption in orchestration: Misalignment—Ms. Eichner

Ms. Eichner asked her eighth-grade students to consider what they would do when faced with scenarios characterized by injustice, like those described in the novel they read together. She leads a discussion about the topic. During the discussion, one child, a Black boy named Kevin, raises his hand to share. He recounts a time he witnessed a man communicating racist epithets to his father during an online game.

As Kevin talks, Ms. Eichner leans slightly forward, her hands clasped in front of her. She watches him intently. Her chin points down toward him, her eyebrows raised, her head nodding a little. Frequently, abruptly, she interjects with clarifying questions. "This is through Skype?" she asks, or "This is a computer game? Through your phone?" It is as if she is interviewing him, reading a battery of questions from a sheet of paper. Her voice is loud and strident, and as she speaks she looks as much toward the rest of the group as she does to Kevin himself.

Kevin hesitantly responds to each of her questions. When he finishes his final answer, Ms. Eichner appears to catch herself from moving on. She walks partially away from him but then stops, turns back towards him, and, in much gentler voice, asks him, "And how did you *feel* when this was all happening?" Her eyes are on Kevin alone now, and her tone milder. She moves to stand just in front of his desk.

Kevin reciprocates the attention, responding emotionally for the first time. "I was in *shock*."

Ms. Eichner asks Kevin several more questions. As she does so, from the back of the room comes a small, high-pitched sound. Ms. Eichner spins her body away from Kevin mid-talk, craning her neck to look. Finally identifying the source of the noise, she asks, "Darius, did you have something, did you want to share something?" She is frowning. "Did you have something, Darius?" she asks again, staring over the heads of the other children to Darius' seat in the back corner.

Darius says nothing. With one more pointed look at him, Ms. Eichner turns back to Kevin. She stares at him intently and says, "I'm *sorry* you had that experience. I *am*." Her sympathy is more exaggerated then before. Then her eyes break from Kevin's and again scan the room. They land on Darius once more as he makes a squawking noise.

As if in an effort to ignore him, Ms. Eichner again addresses Kevin. "I think you should stop playing the game," she advises. "I'm sorry." This time, however, her eyes are on Kevin only fleetingly, as she continues to dart glances in Darius' direction. Kevin gives a half-shrug and looks down. Simultaneously, Darius calls out, "Me too, Kev!" his voice a high and tinny imitation of his teacher's.

This snapshot begins with an example of expressive incoherence. Initially, Ms. Eichner's strident tone and rapid-fire questioning did not appear to match the sensitive, personal nature of Kevin's story. Further, although she spoke to Kevin, her body did not always face him, nor did she look at him when asking each question. The resulting exchange felt almost interview-like,

impersonal, and even slightly antagonistic. Kevin appeared to sense this. At the start of the snapshot his responses were slow and reluctant. It was not until midway through the exchange that things changed. About to move on and redirect her instruction, Ms. Eichner stopped herself. She turned back to Kevin and asked him in a soft, gentle voice, "How did you feel?" Her eyes were only for him in that moment, a sharp contrast to just moments before when her gaze was often trained on other students rather than on Kevin himself. Kevin seemed to feel this shift, and opened up.

Yet, the change in Ms. Eichner's expressive behaviors did not seem to resonate with everyone as equally authentic or compelling. Specifically, Darius seemed to challenge Ms. Eichner's sympathetic display through the skeptical, humorous noises he made from the back of the room and in his mocking comment, "Me too, Kev!" Part of Darius' resistance may be due to the content of the exchange. He might have questioned Ms. Eichner's understanding and treatment of the racism Kevin described in the story, for example, or might have been challenging the solution she offered Kevin simply stop playing the game.

Yet, Darius' response was also likely shaped by Ms. Eichner's expressive behaviors. Darius chose moments for his intercessions that coincided with moments when Ms. Eichner enacted the highest levels of expressive drama, such as when she looked fixedly at Kevin and said, "I'm *sorry* you had that experience. I *am*." Likewise, in his last comment ("Me too, Kev!"), Darius performed a caricature of Ms. Eichner's own verbal intonation that was accurate enough to imply strong awareness of her expressive behaviors. In other words, Darius' comments were designed, performed, and timed in such a way that acknowledged and closely responded to Ms. Eichner's own expressive display. Yet, his responses to her expressive performance seemed also to be characterized by rejection and resistance, rather than by interest or affirmation of Ms. Eichner's *persona work*.

In response, with each of Darius's counter remarks, Ms. Eichner's own expressive presentation of sympathy appeared to lose more of its believability and instead became more expressively incoherent and misaligned. For example, while on one hand Ms. Eichner was even more clear verbally in her sympathy for Kevin after Darius' intercessions, that sympathy seemed increasingly discordant with the remainder of her expressive display. Rather, as the snapshot continued, Ms. Eichner herself appeared to become more distracted and less focused on Kevin himself, despite her words to the contrary.

This snapshot therefore shows how the resistance of one or more children to teachers' *persona work* might further undermine its credibility and power. Darius' resistance shows how children also have some influence in determining the relative success or failure of teachers' expressive orchestration, as such resistance might create additional difficulties in teachers' capacity to use expressive behaviors to orchestrate classroom interaction in ways that help them engage, motivate, and successfully teach all children. In other words, just as each musician contributes to the collective performance of an orchestra but also holds individual power to influence (and undermine) the music, each child in a classroom likewise has power to resist teachers' expressive orchestration—and thus, to potentially undermine it.

Expressive Inequity and Lasting Disruptions in *Persona Work*

All participating teachers sometimes exhibited disruptions in their *persona work,* such as when disparate aspects of their expressive behaviors appeared incoherent with one another or the broader interactional context, or when their *persona work* seemed misaligned to the needs and interpretations of some or all children. Yet, these disruptions were typically fleeting and appeared to have few lasting effects on the teachers' orchestration of classroom interaction. Rather, teachers typically could "reset" their *persona work*, and could regain control the next day at the latest—and usually within the same class period.

Further, as I will describe in Chapter 6, such disruptions in teachers' *persona work* also did not typically occur among the same group of children every day. Thus, they appeared to have little lasting impact on children's overall positive assessments of teachers. For example, Darius' resistance to Ms. Eichner's *persona work* in Snapshot G was unusual; more typically, Darius' apparent engagement and compliance appeared no different from other children in the class. In general, children for whom teachers' *persona work* might not appear to "click" in one moment seemed influenced by it in the next, or at least by the following class period. Therefore, most participating teachers seemed to manage expressive behaviors in ways that were good enough for and influential on most children, most of the time.

Yet, there was one exception. For one participating teacher, Ms. Williams, disruptions in *persona work* occurred consistently with the same children and thus appeared to have more lasting effects. Specifically, Ms. Williams often engaged expressively with the Black boys in her classrooms in ways that were different and more negative. Her *persona work* was, in other

words, often inequitable. This will be described in more detail below and revisited in Chapters 5 and 6.

Ms. Williams did not appear to acknowledge Black boys nonverbally or verbally with the same frequency that she appeared to publicly single out children of other races or genders with her expressive behaviors. For example, she only occasionally answered the questions of Black boys, rarely called on them to read aloud, and infrequently elicited their ideas about the content. Further, when she did invite them to share their thinking publically, she often appeared rushed or distracted as she listened, or she constrained their talk in some way.

For example, in Snapshot H below, Ms. Williams consistently failed to call on one child, a Black boy named Trey. When she finally did recognize his hand, she did so hurriedly, telling him that his would be the "last quick comment."

Snapshot H: Disruption in orchestration: Inequitable attention—Ms. Williams

A child named Trey is the only Black boy to raise his hand in the full hour-long session of Ms. Williams' class. His hand is up for several minutes initially, but Ms. Williams does not call on him. Instead, she engages another student, an Arabic girl named Maya, in a lengthy conversation. Ms. Williams then takes several more hands, not even seeming to see Trey at all. Her eyes rake over and across his desk as they rest on children near or behind him. Trey lowers his hand

Several minutes later, Trey tries again. This time, Ms. Williams eventually calls on him. Before she grants him permission to speak, however, she says curtly, "This is the last quick comment and then we're going to move onto our videos."

At this, Trey looks nonplussed. He pauses for a moment, staring back at her. Then he plows forward with his question, asking in a serious voice, "Is ITT Tech where they teach you about this stuff, like call centers?" Trey wants to know about the relationship between ITT Tech, a nearby university his sister attended, and the call centers in India about which the class has been learning.

In sharp contrast to the gravity in Trey's own voice, Ms. Williams laughs. Then she turns away from him and back to the board. As she does so, she throws out the following response to him: "If you go to ITT Tech they will teach you about those call centers in India, yes." She laughs again.

Trey's seatmate, another Black boy named Marcus, begins to tease him, mockingly repeating, "ITT. I-T-T-T. I-T-T-T-T Tech." Trey rests his head in his hands for several seconds. Then he looks up at Marcus, grins, and shrugs sheepishly.

In this snapshot, Ms. Williams repeatedly passed over Trey, choosing instead to elicit the questions and comments of other children in the class. Finally, she called on him—yet even then

Trey's experience of Ms. Williams' *persona work* was palpably different from that of the other children. Whereas when engaging with other students, Ms. Williams' unhurried voice, her relaxed posture, and her ample follow up questions communicated there was time for each child's idea, her exchange with Trey felt rushed. Even before he spoke, she constrained his opportunity to share, telling him brusquely that his comment needed to be the last one. Likewise, after Trey asked his question Ms. Williams immediately turned away. Her dismissive body language and her laughter gave the impression that she did not take Trey or his question seriously.

In general, not only was Ms. Williams less likely to call on Black boys or elicit their thinking in the whole class context, but her interactions with them in small groups or individually were also expressively different when compared with the ways she engaged with other children. For example, when she talked to them about the subject matter, she was more likely to speak to Black boys sharply or correctively during more intimate exchanges. She also sometimes avoided such smaller exchanges with them entirely, or she kept her interactions generic and entirely unrelated to the content when she talked with them.

In Snapshot I below, for example, Ms. Martin effusively praised one child's work and appeared to overlook (and forgive) another child's *lack* of work—and both were White girls. In contrast, in the same exchange Ms. Williams simultaneously corrected the work of the one Black boy in the group—the same Marcus featured above—and then gave him no opportunity to engage with her in a substantive conversation about her correction or the content more broadly.

Snapshot I: Disruption in orchestration: Inequitable regard—Ms. Williams

The sixth-grade children in Ms. Williams' class are reading in their history textbook about renewable resources, and will shortly answer comprehension questions about the chapter. A Black girl, Imari, begins reading. A few moments into Imari's reading, however, Ms. Williams begins to talk over her in a tight, serious voice.

"I think—You know what? I got a little distracted," she says. "And I think what I'm going to have us do is stop there."

As she talks, Ms. Williams paces resolutely forward toward the front of the room, her expression composed in a business-like mask. As she walks, she glances toward Imari vaguely, saying, "Because—you're great. I want you to keep reading for us when we come back to it. But—I just realized! We have the answer to our first question!"

With that, Ms. Williams transitions to directions. Her voice is firm, quick and high as she says, "Now, I would *love* for you to use words. If you want to use words and pictures you *can*. But I *want* you to think to yourself, if *you* were tutoring or working with a group of fourth graders, and *you* had to explain this to them, *how* could you it?"

Finally, Ms. Williams is ready to place children in small groups. She does not pause or stop, but rather seems to increase the intensity and pace of her voice and movement, weaving back and forth and through the aisles, her arms continually sweeping inward in wide repetitive arcs as she mimes who ought to work together. Even when children begin working, her pace slows only a little. Although she occasionally crouches down or speaks quietly to a group, no more than thirty seconds goes by before she calls out reminders and directives to the whole class. She says, "Let's try to finish up in two more minutes!" or "It sounds like most people are finishing up!" She can also be heard praising the children and groups who have called her over for help with lots of "Good jobs!" and "Wows!" and "Keep up the good work, guys!"

At the end of group work, just after Ms. Williams says to the class, "Alright, let's wrap it up and be ready to move on," Mara, a White girl, asks Ms. Williams to read what she had written on her sheet. Ms. Williams bends over and does so quickly, running her index finger along each line as she reads. Meanwhile, Mara's two groupmates—Anna, another White girl, and Marcus, a Black boy—sit waiting and watching. Anna has only the textbook in front of her and no paper. Marcus, however, has his worksheet out. He glances periodically between it, Ms. Williams, and Mara's own paper.

After reading, Ms. Williams gives Mara a few suggestions in a serious, warm voice. Then, without pausing, she points toward Marcus' paper, and then again at Mara's, gesturing back and forth. "I think you'd better take a look at her answers here for a few more minutes, just to make sure that they match," she says to Marcus.

Yet, all this time, Ms. Williams had not looked at his paper carefully, and made no eye contact with Marcus at all.

Ms. Williams continues by saying, vaguely, "But right now…" She trails off and abruptly turns away, walking quickly to the front of the room where she again brings the class together.

Left to his own devices, Marcus looks down at his paper, and then toward Mara, who is writing furiously. He shrugs, writes a quick word, and then again darts a glance toward Mara. His face is tight, and his body slumps slightly. He drops the hand holding his pen to his lap and stares blankly toward the front of the room where Ms. Williams is addressing the group.

In this snapshot, Ms. Williams rarely addressed Black boys at all as she circulated, at least in comparison to the constant and largely positive feedback she gave other children during this time. Further, when she finally did "land" at Marcus' desk and address him directly, she did so critically and obliquely. She alerted him to the inaccuracy of his worksheet by encouraging him to look at the answers of Mara, a White girl—and she did so in a voice that was much

harsher than she used with Marcus' classmates. Simultaneously, Ms. Williams failed to comment on the fact that Marcus' other group member, who was also a White female, did not have her work out at all and had instead been socializing with peers. Ms. Williams additionally did not appear to look closely at Marcus' sheet prior to making her comment. Finally, rather than allowing Marcus a chance to respond or ask a question about her feedback, Ms. Williams immediately turned away. It is evident, therefore, that while Ms. Williams interacted with the other children in the class—none of whom were Black boys—in ways that seemed warm and encouraging, her expressive behaviors with Marcus felt distant and censorious. Similarly, while Ms. Williams allowed other children ample opportunity to engage with her substantively around the subject matter, she did not create the same occasion for Marcus to talk with her about the content.

In general, Ms. Williams appeared to engage differently with Black boys when circulating and interacting among individuals and small groups. Typically at such times she paused at students' desks to praise or compliment them, applauding them for getting started, for writing neatly, or for having the correct answer. Although her feedback was often related to children's process (e.g., how they sat, talked to one another, wrote, and so on) rather than to the actual content of their contributions, it was largely positive. When they received such feedback, the children often smiled. Yet, it also often happened that during such times when Ms. Williams engaged with individuals and small groups, Black boys were the only group of children *not* to receive positive feedback. Further, in some cases they did not appear get any attention at all from Ms. Williams. Rather, she often appeared to look over and through them, even while simultaneously interacting with children directly next to, in front of, or behind them.

For example, in a similar example to Snapshot I, Ms. Williams urged a Black boy named James to begin his work. She told him, "I want you to refocus and write your ideas down in your notebook." Meanwhile, just a moment before, she had smilingly teased a White boy, Peter, for not starting on his own assignment. In this example, Ms. Williams directed laughing correction at Peter for failing to begin, whereas she administered strong censure towards James for the same offense.

In another example, Ms. Williams circulated among different groups of children, asking questions about what they wrote on a joint assignment. She often paused for lengthy periods with different groups, responded to students' questions and provided suggestions. However, when she

got to Marcus and Sean, she vaguely told them, "Keep up the good work, guys!" Here, Ms. Williams barely paused. Rather, she breezed past, offering no direct feedback on their work. Her rushed and bland encouragement implied her lack of desire to engage academically with Sean and Marcus—the only two Black boys she had approached thus far. In fact, as will be described in Chapter 6, many of the Black children in Ms. Williams' class felt she did not regard them seriously as learners and thinkers or did not think she viewed them as academically capable, largely because of such expressive behaviors.

Observations of Ms. Williams' classrooms also showed that while on one hand she rarely elicited the comments of Black boys or engaged with them in ways that were academically substantive, they themselves were also less likely to participate or respond to her directives as quickly as other children. In other words, it appeared that Ms. William's differential (and negative) treatment of Black boys through her *persona work* may have detrimentally impacted their broader engagement in classroom interaction. For example, it was rare that Black boys raised their hands to speak in class. In the snapshot above, for instance, Trey's insistent desire to participate was the exception, rather than the norm.

In another example, in one class period Ms. Williams ordered the children to talk in small groups about their assignment, telling them, "When I say go, you are going to get up and share with someone at least one thing that you're proud of." After she released them, a handful of Black boys remained sitting for several seconds after her signal to "go," and one never moved at all. Conversely, the other children in the room almost immediately commenced moving and talking animatedly in groups. Likewise, at the end of the activity Ms. Williams told children they had ten seconds to return to their seats. She began counting backward, and most students immediately repositioned themselves at their desks. In contrast, many of the Black boys remained where they were. Rather than moving, they counted back with her. Then, just before she reached "one," they *ran* to their desks, colliding with one another as they did so. Ms. Williams frowned at them, but said nothing.

Across these examples, it was evident that although Ms. Williams used *persona work* to influence, manage, and otherwise orchestrate classroom interactions for *some* of the children in her class in ways that were productive, inequities in her *persona work* significantly impeded her ability to facilitate the learning and engagement of *all* children. Specifically, her expressive behaviors failed to orchestrate interactions productively for the Black boys in her classroom and

did not appear to provide them the same relational and intellectual opportunities. The inequities in her *persona work* seemed instead to limit the interactional possibilities for Black boys to engage with the content and the teacher.

Channels of Expressive Orchestration Using Teachers' *Persona Work*

Teachers must continually navigate endemic uncertainties in the classroom emerging from the unique characteristics and demands of schooling. For example, teachers are faced with the challenge of simultaneously needing to facilitate the learning of individuals, groups, and the entire class. Teachers must also engage and instruct diverse groups of learners around the same subject matter, and they must be able to communicate with different students in ways that ensure every child will learn and engage inside the chaotic and crowded environment of the classroom. I have argued in this chapter that teachers' *persona work* is central for helping them navigate these uncertainties.

Specifically, in this chapter I have asserted that teachers' expressive behaviors can help them "orchestrate" complex interactions between themselves, the students, the subject matter, and the larger classroom environment—i.e., the four "vertices" in the "instructional triangle" (Cohen et al., 2003) in ways designed to maximize the likelihood all children will learn and engage. Teachers' *persona work* has, in other words, a critical shaping power over classroom interaction. Teachers can use it to manage, influence, foster connections between, and direct interactional conditions. For example, expressive behaviors like voice and body language can help draw children's attention, excite or interest children, help teachers convey their regard, or foster a sense of connectedness in the classroom between teacher and students.

As analysis from this chapter showed, participating teachers appeared to use *persona work* in similar ways and in similar "bundles" to orchestrate conditions of classroom interaction—and their expressive behaviors seemed to help *most* children learn and engage *most* of the time. However, analysis also revealed that sometimes teachers' *persona work* was expressively incoherent, was not always impactful on or responsive to different learners, or was inequitable or unjust. In such cases, teachers' capacity to orchestrate classroom interaction productively for all children appeared to stall—either fleetingly (for most teachers), or more permanently, as seemed to be the case with Ms. Williams and at least some of the Black boys in her classroom.

These findings imply that while teachers' expressive behaviors can be useful for orchestrating classroom interaction, they can also create spaces that perpetuate racism and injustice. Certain expressive behaviors can thus impede teachers' ability to expressively orchestrate classroom interaction in ways that help *all* children learn and engage. Analysis points to the fact that while teachers' *persona work* is a critical tool for orchestrating classroom interaction, the *nature* of their expressive orchestration can be highly variable or have different effects on children.

The chapters that follow further explore the tensions underlying teachers' use of *persona work* to orchestrate conditions of classroom interaction in ways that are more or less productive for some or all children. They look more closely at what teachers' expressive "orchestration" entailed from multiple perspectives. Specifically, Chapter 5 shows how, for the teachers in this study, *persona work* was oriented around teachers' need for "control"—both over students and over themselves. Chapter 6, in contrast, shows that while children also hoped for some amount of "control" in teachers' *persona work*, they needed it to be tempered by additional channels of "connection" and "regard" in teachers' expressive orchestration.

Chapter 5

TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF THEIR *PERSONA WORK*

The previous chapter showed there were many similarities across teachers' *persona work*. Not only did teachers use a similar repertoire of expressive behaviors, but they also appeared to use comparable aspects of *persona work* in similar instructional and relational contexts and for comparable reasons. Specifically, it appeared that teachers used *persona work* as a tool for orchestrating conditions of classroom interaction in ways they thought would maximize the likelihood that children would learn. As analysis from the previous chapter showed, however, the teachers were also not always successful at doing so in ways that were equally productive for some or all children. Sometimes, for example, teachers' *persona work* suffered from expressive incoherence, misalignment, and inauthenticity, which made it more difficult for them to shape classroom interaction convincingly. At other points, the ways in which teachers used expressive behaviors to orchestrate classroom interaction appeared to only benefit some children while simultaneously limiting the relational and intellectual opportunities of others.

This chapter revisits these tensions from the perspective of the teachers themselves. It explores teachers' expressive orchestration of classroom interaction by examining how teachers talked about their *persona work* and their understanding of its purposes. Specifically, it shows that the primary way teachers spoke of orchestrating classroom interactions was through the expressive channel of "control." In other words, the teachers in this study talked of using their expressive behaviors to control interactional conditions related to children, the content, the classroom environment, and themselves. Such control, they felt, was critical for getting children to engage and learn in the ways they desired.

Analysis from this chapter also shows that teachers' control may not in fact have always been equitable or productive for all children. For example, the chapter describes how teachers talked about a subset of students in most classrooms—all of whom were children of color—that resisted the control teachers orchestrated through their *persona work,* and who may not have had the same opportunities to engage and learn as other children as a result. The chapter concludes

by arguing, therefore, that not all forms of expressive control may have been equally beneficial for all children in this study. It suggests that in addition to "control," there may be other necessary expressive channels through which teachers need to use and convey *persona work* when orchestrating classroom interaction.

Chapter Overview

This chapter is divided into three sections. I begin by briefly describing the participating teachers' personal histories and their ideas about teaching and learning, and by exploring their general conceptions about their *persona work*. In this section, I show that most teachers had trouble describing their *persona work* when asked about it explicitly. Even teachers who had thought previously about aspects of the construct were not aware of what they were doing expressively or why all the time, nor could they always describe the impact of their expressive behaviors on children. Findings from this section foreshadow important problems and considerations related to teachers' differential awareness of dimensions of their *persona work* and its potentially inequitable effects on different children.

I then argue that while teachers were not always aware of their *persona work* or comfortable talking about it, they nevertheless continually provided examples of their expressive behaviors in their more general talk about teaching. I also show how these references to expressive behaviors typically emerged when teachers discussed exerting some form of control over themselves, children, the content, and the environment. I use this section to argue that "control" was as the primary channel through which teachers appeared to use *persona work* to orchestrate conditions of classroom interaction.

Finally, I describe how teachers feared *losing* control of their *persona work* and of their orchestration of classroom interaction more broadly. I describe what, for these teachers, such losses in expressive control entailed. I show how teachers described losses in expressive control as typically taking place among children of color—but I also describe how the teachers never explicitly made the connection between their losses of control and children's race.

I use these findings to point out that teachers' conceptions of their *persona work* and the control it exerted over children were largely deracialized. In other words, teachers did not typically consider how their expressive behaviors might have differential effects on students, nor did they comment on ways their own expressive behaviors were potentially uneven depending on

the race or gender of the students with whom they interacted. Given these clear (and unspoken) patterns of differential treatment in teachers' *persona work*, I end by speculating that by using control as the exclusive channel through which they expressively orchestrated classroom interaction, teachers' *persona work* may have maximized the likelihood that some children might learn and engage, but not all the children, all the time.

For an overarching conceptual map of the chapter, see Figure 5.1 below.
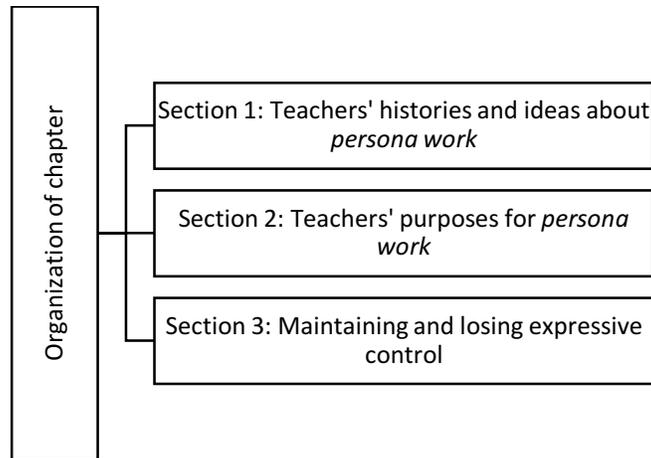
Figure 5.1. *Conceptual map, Chapter 5 ("Teachers' Conceptions of their* Persona Work*")*.

Teachers' Histories and Ideas about *Persona Work*

The inattention in educational research to the expressive dimensions of teachers' work, as well as the lack of training available to them in how to use expressive behaviors purposefully, productively, and equitably, means there are no professional frameworks to guide teachers' *persona work*. As I speculated in the first few chapters of this dissertation, the identities and experiences of teachers—as opposed to their formal education and training—may thus play a critical role in shaping teachers' use of expressive behaviors and in informing the purposes of their *persona work*. Teachers' use of expressive behaviors in the classroom may be largely tied to habit and instinct, informed by personality and experience, and learned through wisdom on the job. Describing dimensions of teachers' personal histories, teaching philosophies and general orientations to children might therefore be important for better understanding how their *persona work* functions in the classroom and for learning about its role in facilitating (or impeding) classroom interactions.

Research has also documented ways in which White teachers specifically have struggled to connect with and instruct children of color. Therefore, learning about teachers' identities and

histories could be useful in understanding how teachers might unevenly use expressive behaviors when engaging with different groups of children. Information about teachers' identities and experiences can also shed light on how and why teachers' *persona work* might be differentially interpreted by different children in cross-cultural classroom settings.

In this first section, I do several things. Although I already introduced each teacher in the previous chapter, I revisit descriptions of the teachers here by providing additional details about their personal histories and views about teaching. Next, I describe how teachers broadly conceptualized *persona work* and discuss the extent to which each teacher thought *persona work* was (or was not) important for her teaching. I then consider teachers' varying intentionality and awareness of different dimensions of *persona work* and of the effects they believe their *persona work* to have on children. For a conceptual overview of this first section, see Figure 5.2.

| Section 1: Teachers' histories and broad ideas about *persona work* | Teachers' histories and views about teaching | Teachers' broad conceptions about *persona work* | Varying intentionality in teachers' *persona work* |

Figure 5.2. *Conceptual map, Section 1* (*"Teachers' Histories and Ideas about* Persona Work").

Teachers' Histories and Views about Teaching

The teachers in this study were referred as participants because they were considered by school administrators to be "expert," based on positive yearly evaluations and "highly effective" district ratings. Each teacher had seven or more years of teaching experience at the time of the study, and all participating teachers were White, female, and middle class. The teachers all also had similar experiences growing up. They each lived in communities that were predominately White and middle class (or affluent), and they attended schools that were racially and socioeconomically homogenous. Many of these teachers did not, in other words, have experiences engaging with individuals who were culturally, racially, or socioeconomically different from them until well into adulthood. In fact, for some of these teachers, their first experiences interacting with individuals who did not identify as White or middle class occurred with the children in their classrooms.

I provide a more detailed description of each participating teacher and her experience below. For an overview of all participating teachers, see Table 5.1.

Table 5.1.
Overview of Participating Teachers

Teacher	Years Teaching	Grade	School	Content	Number of Students	Background
Ms. Voss	34	6	West Learning Academy	ELA and Social Studies	21	Two years at West Learning Academy, remaining time elsewhere across the state, all grades and multiple subjects, primarily working with at-risk children
Ms. Williams	17	6	Apple Creek	ELA and Social Studies	30 (1) 32 (2)	Has only taught at Apple Creek, including student teaching
Ms. Lombardi	18	7	Apple Creek	ELA	15	Primarily taught at Apple Creek, but was also a substitute in the district for all ages; certified in ELA and French
Ms. Martin	7	7	Apple Creek	ELA	31 (1) 33 (2)	Has only taught at Apple Creek, including student teaching; certified in ELA and Spanish
Ms. Eichner	20	8	Apple Creek	ELA	25	Has only worked in the Apple Creek district, but began as an elementary teacher; spent several years also as the assistant principal at the school; student taught at Apple Creek
Ms. Reid	8	8	Apple Creek	ELA and Social Studies	30	Has taught at Apple Creek for two years; previously worked at a public middle school and a Catholic high school; prior to teaching she was a social worker

Ms. Voss. Ms. Voss grew up in a predominantly middle class, White suburb on the opposite side of the state from where this study takes place. She received a bachelor's degree in education from a college approximately twenty minutes from her hometown, and holds a master's degree in educational leadership. At the time of the study, Ms. Voss had been teaching for 34 years. While it was her twentieth year in her current district, it was only her second year at West Learning Academy, as the school itself was newly established.

In her career, Ms. Voss taught at many different grade levels, from elementary to alternative adult education, and had worked for both public and parochial schools. Although the bulk of her teaching experiences occurred in Michigan, Ms. Voss also worked in several other states. She said,

> I've had lots and lots of experiences with lots of different groups of people… and I guess
> it's all been with seriously at-risk, impoverished youth. I've worked with at risk
> categories like incarcerated, kids on tether, kids in the legal system. I've always dealt
> with some real hard nuts.

In fact, Ms. Voss believed her students at West Learning Academy fit this description. She said of them,

> We don't know what's happened before they come here. We don't know what happens on the weekend. We just know that at the end of the week when they have to go home for the weekend they are crazy. They don't want to be home.

There were twenty-one students in Ms. Voss' sixth-grade ELA class under observation for this study, a class that Ms. Voss described as "quirky" and filled with "unique, strong personalities." According to Ms. Voss, the children were not shy, and always spoke their minds. Ms. Voss encouraged this. When asked what kind of experience she wanted children to have, she responded, "I want them to know that it's okay to think for themselves, be critical, and disagree with somebody." As an example, she described a situation when one child, a Black boy named Khalid, challenged her grammar:

> I'm all about precise word choice. And something I said over here to somebody—Khalid, I think—well, he called me on it. Because I said something but forgot some word, like "of" or "over"—something that made what I said confusing. So, he said, "Oh, do you mean…? And he *corrected* me! Because I am always saying to them, "Is this what you mean?" Because I *didn't* in fact mean what I'd said! And Khalid was calling me on it…. But that's what I want. I want them to know that they can challenge me too, that I'm not off limits.

Yet Ms. Voss also made it clear that despite inviting questions and challenge from her students, she was still the one in charge. For example, in response to the question, "How would you characterize your relationship to your students?" she said,

> Part of what we're doing here is we're all learning together. I just happen to have more power and they better not forget it…They know. I'm in charge. We can do this together, we can work at it, you can have your voice, but ultimately, I'm responsible for this class. I'm responsible for what you learn and how you learn it. And you can *help* me with that by telling me how you learn best. We can work back and forth that way. But in the end, this is what you're going to get: you're going to *do* it.

As was evident here, for Ms. Voss being "in charge" emerged from her responsibility to organize her students and teach them in ways that ensured they were going to learn. Her comment invited some amount of influence from children in terms of *how* they learned and implied her

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willingness to help them do so in diverse ways. Yet, it also brooked no negotiation about who was ultimately in control of children's learning and interactions in class: Ms. Voss herself.

Part of Ms. Voss' drive to be "in charge" stemmed from her desire to provide children with structure and keep them comfortable and safe. When she was young, Ms. Voss said she did not always have a positive routine growing up or people she could count on. She felt it was important, therefore, to use her role as teacher to accommodate for any lack of consistency or security in her students' lives. She said of this,

> The bottom line that I truly believe is that if you're a student who lives on the edge, who has any risk factors at all, you're disenfranchised. And you don't have people in your life, especially in positions of power or authority who are really good strong role models that you can count on. And I think that comes from—even though I could count on my mom when I was growing up, I came from a crazy house where there was a lot of abuse early on and a lot of craziness with my biological father…and it just led to me stepping back and not really wanting to connect and make connections. I had wished that just somebody in my educational life had said, "What are you all about?" and had wanted to take some kind of interest…. So it's important to me to make those connections and to be someone at least the kids can feel safe with. I didn't always feel safe at school; I didn't always feel safe in my life. Because there wasn't always that safety net. And so, it's important to me, and I think the kids feel it. I think it's something that makes me successful. If you have that foundation, kids will do anything for you.

The "foundation" Ms. Voss referred to here is complex. She spoke first about children's need for a strong authority figure both at home and in the classroom, someone who could, through their power and control, help children feel safe and successful. Yet, when describing the nature of these "good strong role models that you can count on," she also alluded to the idea of "connection." It would seem on one hand that connection—or what she calls taking "some kind of interest"—is also a characteristic of the authority and power she described here, and even a prerequisite for it. On the other hand, Ms. Voss' words also implied that such connection also emerges *from* moments when role models are strong, consistent, and positive. These themes of connection and control will be revisited later in terms of teachers' *persona work*.

Ms. Williams. Ms. Williams grew up in an affluent White neighborhood not far from Apple Creek. She received her bachelors and master's degrees in education from a university nearby. Her teaching position at Apple Creek was the only one she had ever held. At the time of the study, she had worked at the school for 17 years in the same role, and even did her student teaching there. Ms. Williams taught ELA and social studies to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. For this study, she was observed teaching two sections of sixth grade social studies.

According to Ms. Williams, her sixth-grade social studies classes were "like totally different animals, the first group versus the second group. They are like creatures of totally different patterns. It's very strange to me." She expounded on this by saying,

> The first group, they will talk with each other constantly and I have to remind them, "When you are turning and talking make sure it's focused, make sure it's listening." The other class I have to, I'm like, "Have you heard me? You're welcome to collaborate with others at your table"—but it's, like, *quiet*.

As a result, Ms. Williams said, "I know I have to act differently with them"—i.e., with the two classes of children. She explained this way:

> The second group, I have to be energized and excited all the time. But with that first group, I have to be so rigid. I really have to think, what am I going to say, because I can picture – the things I can do with second hour class that I can't do with the first because they can't handle that freedom.

One of the reasons Ms. Williams wanted to be observed in both classrooms was due to the different emotional experiences she had with each group. "I wonder, does it show on the outside? Am I actually doing anything different?" she asked me. As this chapter later describes, within that first class was a group of Black boys with whom Ms. Williams said she had particular trouble engaging and directing. It may be, therefore, that Ms. Williams' experience with the boys shaped her impression of the class more generally, and negatively influenced her perceptions of her own teaching during that class period. However, as we saw in the previous chapter and will revisit later and in the following chapter, Ms. Williams also did seem to engage with those children in ways that were expressively different from how she used *persona work* with other children in the class.

In response to the question, "If you had to generalize about what kind of teacher you'd like to be, what is it?" Ms. Williams said, "A caring teacher, somebody who genuinely has the

time to care about and teach individuals as opposed to just caring about them as a class. That's what I have to work hard on." As evidenced by the following exchange, her definition of the word "caring" implied some connection between teachers and children beyond just an instructional relationship:

> Researcher: What is "caring?"
>
> Ms. Williams: Like, knowing about them, making them feel like they want to be there.
>
> Researcher: Was "caring" always your orientation? Did you always want to be that way?
>
> Ms. Williams: No, I wanted to be a *good* teacher.
>
> Researcher: What does that mean?
>
> Ms. Williams: Like, I wanted my students to write really good essays. And that's still important to me, but I've found that you can get them to *want* to write more essays if you care about them.

In her comment, Ms. Williams seemed to feel "care" is a tool for helping children feel connected to class and thus, as she put it, for getting them to "want to be there." "Care" is, in other words, what teachers can use to convince children to do the work and engage in class. Like Ms. Voss, Ms. Williams was acknowledging a relationship between the ideas of care or connection and her instructional goals, and appeared to believe the former should be leveraged strategically and intentionally to achieve the latter. Again, this idea will be revisited further below.

In addition to identifying as White, female, and middle class, Ms. Williams also identified as gay. When asked, "Do you ever share details about yourself with children?" Ms. Williams responded,

> You know, well, it's harder for me though because I'm gay. And that for years, I didn't tell any teachers in the school and then I became more comfortable with myself and my relationship and I told other teachers. And then the students had to know. The students started catching on, asking some other teachers. They would never ask me… But now that my daughters are here and my daughters' friends have known since kindergarten or first grade that they have two moms, I am assuming that people just know. But nobody still ever *asks*... So, there are times when I think other teachers would talk about their husband or whatever, and I just say, "My family." So, I am consciously editing my stories about my immediate family.

Evident in Ms. Williams' comment was the idea that this aspect of her identity made her more guarded when talking to children about her personal life—which, as will be evidenced later, affected her *persona work*. As will also be further explored later, Ms. Williams additionally felt that, because of her identity as a gay woman, she had understood and experienced prejudice. She said, "I'm a White woman and people don't see me as a minority. But I *am* a minority that can relate to other minorities about discrimination."

Ms. Lombardi. Ms. Lombardi knew Apple Creek and its district well. She grew up in the area, and graduated from a public high school located in the same district as Apple Creek and which, at that time, was very affluent and largely White. After receiving her bachelor's degree in education from a nearby university, Ms. Lombardi returned to the district to begin teaching, and worked there ever since.

Like Ms. Williams, Ms. Lombardi did her student teaching at Apple Creek, and then took a job as a substitute teacher in the district—mostly in high schools—for three years before joining the Apple Creek staff full-time. She was originally hired as the middle school French teacher at Apple Creek. Her job at Apple Creek at the time of the study, however, was to teach a multimedia reading intervention program for children who had been identified as reading below grade level. She also served as a mentor teacher at the school, and new teachers were often sent to her classroom to observe.

During her time at the school, Ms. Lombardi received her master's degree in education part-time, and then enrolled in a school leadership program that trained her to be a "teacher leader." Ms. Lombardi was also considering enrolling in a doctoral program. She had been teaching for a total of 18 years.

Ms. Lombardi said she wanted to make personal connections with every child and make them feel valued, honored, and noticed. When asked "Why don't you tell me about what brought you to teaching?" she explained,

> I loved loved loved my second-grade teacher. She planted a seed that never ever stopped growing… She visited me when I had chicken pox. She left a huge impact. From that point on I decided it wasn't just the teaching I wanted to do, it was the personal connection. The "make a difference" part.

Every morning, Ms. Lombardi arrived early and stood in the hallway to greet every child, including those she did not know or teach. She said of this decision,

Over the years, word of mouth is big. You become a legend that people know. And if you've touched enough kids and if you made enough differences, the bigger your legend story really is. I'm not touching 800 kids in this building but I sure do make a chance [*sic*], every chance I get. When I walk down the hall I'm saying "hi" to kids, to former students, "hi" to friends of former students, "hi" to kids I don't really know. I just try to be a presence that they do recognize.

Ms. Lombardi believed that when children knew her—or at least when they knew *of* her—they would be more interested in learning from her, and would also be more likely to follow her directions and rules. "When they know of me," she said, "It is just easier to have class with them, to do the things we need together." As with Ms. Williams, she valued connection, or "knowing," between herself and her students, as she seemed to feel that such connection better equipped her to influence, engage, and teach children.

More than the other teachers in this study, Ms. Lombardi continually gave personal and academic advice to her students. When asked why this was, she said,

I like that teaching style: cooperative learning and being able to communicate. And that became a huge part of my philosophy.... I try to guide them, and show them how to communicate. Because when you learn how to communicate with others you can be a stronger student.

In fact, as will be shown in later sections, Ms. Lombardi often thought about her own language when interacting with children, such as by trying to model what she called "proper English" when engaging in conversations with them about the subject matter.

Ms. Martin. Ms. Martin was in her seventh year of teaching at the time of the study. Like Ms. Williams, she had been a teacher at Apple Creek since the beginning of her career, and she also did her student teaching at the school. Ms. Martin was originally trained as both a Spanish and an English language arts teacher. At the time of the study, however, she only taught two seventh grade ELA classes, and spent the rest of her day as a reading support lead, where she serviced a case load of approximately 35 children. Ms. Martin held bachelor's and master's degrees from two nearby universities. The former degree was in education and the latter in literacy and culture.

Ms. Martin was well known and well loved by many students at Apple Creek. Part of the reason for this was because her work in reading support took her into many different classrooms.

This gave her an opportunity to meet and engage with many students. She also opened her classroom at lunchtime to about 20 children each day for eating and socializing. When asked why the children came to her room, she said,

> It's not the lunch room. And they think I'm cool enough. Like, the boys will *way* over share. They will tell me all the gossip. They're not even quiet about what they're talking about. They try to get things out of me. "Do you hate that teacher? We think you hate that teacher. We can tell."

Later, when asked how these and other students would describe her, Ms. Martin responded,

> Well, they would say, "Ms. Martin, you are the most chill teacher. You never yell at us! You would never be angry! You're so laid back! That's why we can tell you stuff. And I say, "Please stop telling me, right now!" [Laughs.] And they're like, "But you're young!"

When interacting with children, Ms. Martin tried to live up to this version of herself. She said she tried to be "relaxed" in her interactions with children, which she described this way: "I try to be relaxed the whole time. I try to be excited about things, but a relaxed excited. I don't want to be crazy, a crazy person. I try to be these things all the time." For Ms. Martin, being "relaxed" appeared to mean maintaining calm and level-headedness in the classroom, such as by rarely exhibiting signs of anger or stress.

Both of Ms. Martin's seventh grade ELA classes were observed as part of this study, and each was an hour long. The first occurred mid-morning. Ms. Martin said of them, "They're my good class. Really well behaved." The other class took place in sixth hour, which was the very last period of the day. Of them, Ms. Martin said, "They're ready to *go*. There are a lot of boys, basketball playing boys who are all friends on the team. There's a lot of holding out. Sometimes some things are productive, many times not. They're just louder." Yet, for Ms. Martin, the noise and busyness of her sixth hour class wasn't a problem. She said, "Despite their more squirreliness in general, we also joke a bit more. Sometimes we do some things that are productive, many times not. But they are really great kids."

In general, Ms. Martin said that both her morning and afternoon classes were "relatively high-achieving." The reason for this, she said, was that any seventh-grade child identified as reading below grade level was pulled from Ms. Martin's classes and sent to Ms. Lombardi's classroom for remedial ELA support.

Ms. Eichner. Ms. Eichner lived several blocks from Apple Creek at the time of the study, and said that many of her students were also her neighbors. She grew up in close proximity to the school, in what at that time was a predominantly White and affluent suburb. Not only did she attend high school in the same district, as did several of the other participating teachers, but she went to Apple Creek herself as a middle schooler.

Ms. Eichner began her teaching career at an elementary school in the same district as Apple Creek, and then moved around in the district for a few years before joining the Apple Creek teaching staff. At the time of the study, she had been with the school for 18 years, but had 23 total years of teaching experience. In addition to holding bachelor's and master's degrees in education, she also held a doctorate in educational leadership, and had served for several years as Apple Creek's interim assistant principal.

For this study, Ms. Eichner was observed teaching an eighth-grade English language arts at the very end of the day. Although the class was diverse in terms of students' personalities, she said that children learned to tolerate one another's idiosyncrasies and laugh with each other. Ms. Eichner described the class this way:

> It's a fun group. Very different—if you were, like, walking into the cafeteria it's a variety of groups of kids. I have a big basketball and athlete crew, and a very studious crew. And ethnically it's so diverse. But they find ways to enjoy each other. It is like—it has become like a little family. They tolerate each other's idiosyncrasies, they laugh with each other, but they also support each other. So, it has developed into one of those very unique groups.

Ms. Eichner felt she was a caring but tough teacher. When asked about her teaching philosophy, she said,

> I hope that kids know that I care, but that caring doesn't mean that there's a free pass. Caring means hopefully that I'm going to ride you, and that I'm willing to work as hard as I'm asking you to work, but I'm going to ask you to work that hard.

Similar to many of the teachers previously described, Ms. Eichner equated "care" with her ability to achieve her instructional goals. For her, it was about engaging with children academically, as well as convincing *children* to engage. The purpose of Ms. Eichner's "care" was to get children to "work hard," and to create a space through which she was able to control and "ride" children so they did what she wanted them to academically.

In addition to being "caring," Ms. Eichner said that she also believed teachers must be responsive and adaptive to the needs and interests of students. This emerged in her conversation about what she thought teachers should *not* do. When asked, "Can you tell if a teacher is less effective just by how they talk or interact?" she said,

> When it's like reading from a script. When it doesn't matter who's sitting in front of you…I mean, I've had it myself where you start it, and it's not catching. And you insist on keeping going in a way that you're going because that's what's on the paper. And that is really I think the kiss of death.

Rather than simply teach "what's on the paper," Ms. Eichner's words implied her belief that teachers must enliven and personalize the content through their instructional approach. In fact, Ms. Eichner even admitted to teaching the same lesson again in a different way to the same group of children on two consecutive days when she felt it did not "catch" the first time.

Ms. Reid. Like most of the teachers in this study, Ms. Reid grew up not far from Apple Creek. She said her neighborhood growing up was almost completely White and wealthy, and that her school was relatively segregated:

> In high school, we had one Black student. There was also a Vietnamese population—not big, maybe ten—but it was otherwise as White as you can imagine…. And we weren't very diverse in my neighborhood but my parents, maybe because we were so Catholic, really believed in treating everybody equal.

In fact, this theme of "treating everybody equally" emerged in other comments made by Ms. Reid—and other participating teachers—when they spoke of teaching. Many teachers wanted children to see them as fair and impartial, especially in their *persona work*. They did not want children to think they gave preference to some children over others due to students' race or ethnicity. Examples of this will be provided later in the chapter.

Ms. Reid received two bachelor's degrees from neighboring universities—one in education and one in psychology. For eleven years prior to teaching, she worked as a social worker. In that role, she provided counseling and support to at-risk parents and families from many different racial and cultural identities. Although part of her social work job entailed working with children, Ms. Reid said she wanted even more interaction with them. She left social work for teaching because, she said, "I want to work with kids and that's where I'm the happiest." Describing the transition, she said,

Switching over I was worried but I always tell everybody this is the best decision I ever made. My worst day as a teacher was still better than my best day as a social worker. I love what I do all the time, even on my bad days … I love it here and I know I have a long way to go as a teacher but I'm pretty *confident* as a teacher, so every time my principal says try this and try this I do everything because I *want* to get better and I love it here.

At the time of the study, Ms. Reid had been teaching for eight years: three at Apple Creek as an ELA and social studies teacher, and the years before that at a public high school and a Catholic elementary school, respectively. She was in the process of earning her master's in education. For this study, Ms. Reid was observed teaching a combined eighth grade ELA and social studies class. When asked if she was a good teacher, she responded,

I don't know if I have the best strategies, but I do think—I don't understand when I'm in a situation and a teacher is like, "Oh, this kid is a piece of garbage, they never do anything right." That is not my perspective. I *love* being around kids.

Ms. Reid said she made it a habit to engage with each child and ask him or her questions about their lives. She said she wanted her students to feel at ease classroom, and free to be themselves rather than forced to act some way that she, as teacher, prescribed:

There is one thing that I really want my students to say when they fill out those surveys [for this study]: That they feel comfortable in my classroom. I don't need them to say, "She's the best teacher ever, I learn so much from her"—even though I do want them to learn and be successful. But I want them to be comfortable in the classroom first because I think one feeds off the other. If they are comfortable, then they will try to please you or try to get it [the content] or do what you ask. So, I do want them to feel like that's my goal for the environment.

In Ms. Reid's description of her desired classroom environment emerges a familiar sentiment. Implicit in her comments—and in those of many other participating teachers—is the idea that "connection" and "care" are critical aspects of teaching work, but are not necessarily ends in themselves. As Ms. Reid put it, when children feel connected or comfortable, they will "try to please you" or "do what you ask." Her words echoed those of the other teachers, who similarly described the ways they leveraged their care of and connections with children to help them influence, engage, and ultimately shape and control children's experiences in class.

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Teachers' Conceptions about *Persona Work*

When first engaging participating teachers in conversations about the topic of study, I told them I was interested in how they used voice, body language, gaze, other aspects of *self*. I asked if they ever did so intentionally, and, regardless, whether they had any sense of how their expressive behaviors "appeared" to children. I also offered teachers examples of what I meant by "expressive behaviors," such as the way a teacher's voice might change during instruction, or how she might stand and move about the classroom. I was unsure of the extent to which participating teachers would be familiar with the topic of this study or would recognize it in their own practice, given that researchers and teacher education programs have allotted scant attention to the aspect of teaching I call *persona work*.

In general, the teachers' awareness of their expressive behaviors fell on a spectrum. On one end were Ms. Lombardi and Ms. Voss, both of whom believed that expressive behaviors were central to their teaching work and who were often aware of managing resources of *self* in unique ways to help them achieve their goals in the classroom. On the other end of the spectrum were Ms. Martin and Ms. Reid, who were less sure about whether their expressive behaviors mattered for teaching, and who felt they were not often aware of them in their everyday teaching practice. Ms. Williams and Ms. Eichner fell somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. Both these teachers became increasingly aware over the course of the study of how they used aspects of the *self* in their teaching, but neither had previously given these expressive behaviors much thought.

The spectrum of teachers' beliefs about their *persona work* is summarized in Table 5.2 and described below.

Table 5.2
Varying Levels of Explicit Intentionality in Persona Work

Less explicit awareness of expressive behaviors	➔	More explicit awareness of expressive behaviors
Ms. Martin ➔ Ms. Reid ➔ Ms. Williams ➔ Ms. Eichner ➔ Ms. Lombardi ➔ Ms. Voss		

Embracing the *persona*: Ms. Voss and Ms. Lombardi. Both Ms. Voss and Ms. Lombardi were often conscious of leveraging expressive behaviors like voice and body language

in the classroom, and they felt that doing so was critical for their teaching. When talking about her instruction, for example, Ms. Voss often referred to the idea that teaching was a "performance," wherein teachers were "actors," children "the audience," and the classroom her "stage." When I asked, for example, "What do teachers need to know in order to teach?" she responded this way: "Use your stage, manipulate your audience, keep their focus and attention. It is a lot about acting."

Ms. Voss described how, at lunch, she sometimes asked her student teachers—most of whom were also White and female—to rehearse different ways of speaking or moving that they could later use with children. Sometimes, for instance, she would have the student teachers repeat directions in different tones of voice or stand in different ways, or she might ask them to read a passage aloud in different voices. Of this she said,

> I get them to do all kinds of things because when we don't work on it it's like they just don't know what to do with themselves and the kids check out. So, they would sometimes talk like this [mumbles inaudibly, holds a hand over her mouth] or like *this*, in this kind of *voice* that is so *excited* [adopts a bright, peppy tone]. And they just don't have any spatial awareness and might stand facing the wrong way or they talk for a half hour when they should really talk for ten minutes. I tell them the most important thing is you have to practice so you know what you're communicating to them and making sure they really hear you and do what you're saying.

When she commented that the novice teachers with whom she worked "just didn't know what to do with themselves," Ms. Voss meant it literally. As her remarks indicated, her student teachers often were unsure how to speak or position their bodies in ways that were engaging or clear for children or that helped them communicate the subject matter engagingly. "What are you hoping to teach them to do?" I followed up. Ms. Voss responded, "To perform! Otherwise they're [the students] really bored and they don't learn from you anymore."

Like Ms. Voss, Ms. Lombardi felt that a teacher's outward manner was critical for instruction, and that this was something teachers could purposefully craft by speaking, moving, or otherwise communicating in unique ways. She called this "establishing a presence." When Ms. Lombardi first started her career as a teacher, she was only two years older than most of the students in the high school French class she taught. She described it this way, in response to the

question, "Were there things you remember doing in our first few years as a teacher that helped you?"

> I took over a presence in the room. Even though I'm short, I would always start by staying something like, "I know I look young and I know I look small. You probably can't even see me if one of your classmates comes in front of me. Which is why you're going to stay in your seats." And I said, "If you *want* to go anywhere, if you raise your hand I am *happy* to help you. Because I don't know your names yet, you don't know me, but we're going to make this work…I would love for us to get through it, for you to understand it, for me to actually teach you today, and to make sure that we can do that without disruptions." … And so, I kind of started with a presence. I was way more cocky to them than I really felt like on the inside. On the inside, I was shaking and looking around the room at all these big oafs looking at me.

According to Ms. Lombardi, her "presence" helped her project an appearance of being taller, more confident, and more experienced than she actually was. This was especially important, she said, when working with high school students, given their similarity in age to her at the time she first started teaching:

> It was about establishing a presence when you're one year older, and not even a full year older, than some of the kids that you taught. It was really important for me to be able to do. So, it wasn't just age. It was age and get control, get respect, get going.

Ultimately, as underscored in Ms. Lombardi's comment above, her "presence" was about being in "control"—or at least appearing to be. In this sense, it facilitated her instruction, allowing her to, as she put it, "get respect [and] get going."

When asked what her "presence" looked like, Ms. Lombardi sat up very straight, squinted her eyes, lifted her chin, and gazed piercingly toward the desks beyond, her lips tightly pursed. Then she relaxed and said, laughingly, that with nearly two decades of teaching experience under her belt, her "presence" no longer looked the same way with every child or class. She said, "It is not steady. It definitely depends upon what happened before. Or it definitely depends on the mood or tone of the story or the seriousness, the level of seriousness of the conversation." In fact, because of the diverse nature of the teaching positions Ms. Lombardi took on when she worked as a substitute teacher, she specifically described her presence as, even then, being "all over the

place. The kids kept changing. The demographics kept changing. So, it was learning new things to establish that presence every time I walked into a different level."

On the other hand, Ms. Lombardi also alluded to facets of her "presence" that remained the same regardless of whom or what she taught—or which did so, at least, at the start of her career.

It was always, "appear firm, appear strong, appear strict." But relinquish that strictness as they realize that you're not kidding around…. We couldn't tell a joke, I didn't crack a smile until I could…so I just needed to be able to establish that presence even though I knew I was going in, looking really young and being small for my age with height, no stature either.

Even up to the time of the study, Ms. Lombardi said there were some specific aspects of what she termed her "presence" that tended to remain consistent across classes. In response to the question, "Is there anything that still stays the same in your presence?" she said,

I have a teacher face. I stand in certain parts of the room when I'm going to yell. I don't yell very often but when I do my voice changes. I have a stern voice, I have a fun voice. And my eyes—just all the things I need to do to get the kids to pay attention and teach them.

In her comment above, Ms. Lombardi linked her "presence" to a specific goal: wrangling and controlling the children's attention and interest to facilitate instruction. For her, therefore, "presence" was not just about appearing to children to be more confident than she actually was, but also about convincing children to work and engage in the ways she wanted them to.

Although both Ms. Lombardi and Ms. Voss acknowledged that their expressive behaviors in and out of the classroom differed, they also felt that each style of communicating and interacting in these different contexts was equally real, and was equally a part of "who" they were. In response to the question, "How different do you think you act in and out of school?" Ms. Lombardi pointed out, "It's so ingrained in me, how I am here. I don't think I do it on purpose any more, it's just who I am." Ms. Voss similarly explained, "As you're doing it, it becomes natural."

The teachers' responses communicated the idea that while, on one hand, they recognized their expressive behaviors were tools for their instructional and relational work in the classroom, their resulting performances were no less real or authentic. However, because Ms. Voss and Ms.

Lombardi felt their expressive behaviors were closely aligned with "who" they were—at least in the context of the classroom—they also were not always aware of every facet of their *persona work* or of every one of its effects on children or on classroom interaction more broadly. The stratagem and intentionality they brought to some expressive dimensions of their work, in other words, did not mean that they were *always* intentional in or conscious of their *persona work*.

Emerging awareness of *persona work*: Ms. Eichner and Ms. Williams. Both Ms. Eichner and Ms. Williams thought aspects of *self* might be important for their larger teaching work, but were not always sure how. Further, rather than already being cognizant of many ways they used *persona work* in the classroom, as were Ms. Lombardi and Ms. Voss, the awareness and intentionality of Ms. Eichner and Ms. Williams about the expressive dimensions of their practice grew slowly over the course of the study. This is described below.

In response to the question, "How do you know to speak or move different ways at different times in class?" Ms. Eichner said, "I think there are many pieces that are very intentional and others that are just innate." As an example, she explained, "I think my pacing the room is intentional. It drives some kids crazy—but I can cover a lot of ground without somebody feeling like I'm only hovering over them…so, that piece is intentional." Ms. Eichner also flagged what she called her "placement" in the room as purposeful: "I think 'placement' is also intentional. Like, where I'm standing in relationship to the instruction. I experiment with different things there." Additionally, Ms. Eichner said she sometimes used her voice purposefully. As she described, "I try to be conscientious of—to notice when—I'm talking over them. I bring it [voice] down when I do that."

When asked to cite further examples of the expressive dimensions of her teaching, Ms. Eichner was less sure what to say or name. "I can't really think of anything else," she said. However, this changed as the study progressed. During interviews, she revealed that she had been increasingly attentive to the expressive dimensions of her work. "I have been paying attention to myself more," she said. "Maybe I am starting to notice more things about it, but it is hard to keep track."

Even with her increased attention to her expressive work, Ms. Eichner was often not sure how to generalize about the effects her voice, body language, and other expressive behaviors had on her students or instruction. For example, toward the end of the study, she was asked, "Do you think any differently about the role things like your voice or body language have in the

classroom, like on students for instance?" She responded, "Well, I'm never totally sure. Is it them responding to the way I talk or to something I said or to something I don't even realize or all those things at once?"

Unlike Ms. Eichner, Ms. Williams initially had trouble pinpointing anything at all she did expressively, at least when asked about her expressive behaviors out of context (e.g., "Can you think of anything you do with your voice or body during instruction?). She justified her lack of awareness of the expressive dimensions of her work this way:

> It is hard because in your head you're constantly thinking, "What's the next five minutes from now, ten minutes from now?" "What time is it?" "What do I still have to do?" It's always going on in your head, and it's *horrible* because you cannot—it's *so* hard to be present.

In other words, Ms. Williams worried that adopting a laser focus on expressive behaviors would distract her from other critical aspects of teaching work. As her comment above implied, she felt instead that her responsibilities required her to constantly look ahead, make predictions, manage possibilities, and adapt—and that these things were in opposition to attending to her voice, body, and other expressive behaviors in the moment.

However, Ms. Williams' awareness of her *persona work* also grew as the study progressed. As the weeks passed, she increasingly was able to name ways she used specific aspects of *self*, such as eye contact or where she stood in the room. She discovered there were things she did expressively in the classroom subconsciously, but for specific reasons, and she noticed that her expressive behaviors in school were sometimes different from how she acted in other contexts. For example, in response to the question, "Are you becoming more aware of yourself and how you talk or move?" Ms. Williams said, "Definitely, definitely more of how I do some things in a certain way for the classroom here, like maybe walk a certain way or always saying certain things to kids."

Yet, Ms. Williams said she was only able to concentrate on one type of expressive behavior at a time. This too was similar to Ms. Eichner's experience. For example, towards the end of the study I asked Ms. Williams, "Are their other things you notice yourself doing in addition to your expression [which she had just shared about]?" She replied, "No. That was the big one I was making myself focus on." She explained her narrow focus this way:

I think they [expressive behaviors] probably are important but I can't pay attention to them all the time enough to be sure what exactly I'm doing. Probably I'm messing some of them up, but I like to think I got good at some of them, like maybe what I look like when I'm listening to kids or noticing where I'm standing in the room. But I don't really know, it's hard to say. It's hard to keep track of them all.

While Ms. Williams believed that her expressive behaviors were probably important for her teaching, she was still not sure of the nature of that importance or of their effects on children. As her comment above also implied, it was additionally difficult for her to attend to the ways different expressive behaviors intersected with one another to convey an overall impression to children.

Ms. Williams became increasingly concerned that children would think her relational overtures were fake, or what she called "artificial," as her awareness of the expressive dimensions of practice grew. In an example of this, she described how as she became more conscious of her facial expression children too would notice and respond negatively to her expressive stratagem:

I really thought about it and realized that 90% of the time I am making very conscious choices with my face. I notice that, when they're [students] telling me something, sometimes in my head I am actively thinking several minutes ahead and not even listening.... I really wanted to show interest and I made these *choices* to do it in my expression as I was saying what I was saying to them. I'm hoping it doesn't come out as something that is artificial.

Yet, Ms. Williams' fear of appearing inauthentic or artificial to children because of a strategic expressive performance was tempered by the fact that, as she put it, children continued to want to engage with her and "tell her things." When responding to the prompt, "Could you say more about whether you think children view the ways you're using voice and body or expression as being artificial?" she said,

I don't think so because the kids who come up and tell me things still keep coming up to tell me things. And if they thought I was really fakey then they wouldn't. Like I said, kids are really good bullshit detectors. So, I guess they buy it.

In other words, the students' willingness to share ideas and experiences with Ms. Williams—even when she felt herself being purposeful or strategic in her expressive responses to them—mitigated her fear that she came across to them as artificial or disingenuous.

Rejecting the *persona*: Ms. Reid and Ms. Martin. Of all the participating teachers, Ms. Reid and Ms. Martin were the least inclined to cite specific expressive behaviors. In fact, these two teachers were also the most resistant to talking generally about or reflecting on the concept of *persona work*.

Ms. Reid was unsure whether she leveraged her expressive behaviors strategically or in ways that were visibly different from how she might act in other contexts—and, regardless, this was not something she was used to thinking about or that which considered especially important for her teaching work. Rather, in response to the question, "How much do you think about how you appear to the children, like in terms of how you talk or move?" she said,

> I come in, I teach, and I know when I'm having a bad day I'm probably not as good a teacher as when I'm having a good day. I'm probably a bit harder on them and I know my patience is probably not always where it should be. But that's it.

As her description indicates, although Ms. Reid intuited she might be acting differently with children depending on her mood, she was not able to characterize this difference in terms of explicit expressive behaviors. Rather, she spoke vaguely about, for example, being "not as good a teacher" or being "harder on them."

At one point Ms. Reid expressed her discomfort at being asked so many questions about specific expressive behaviors. After being pressed on whether she could cite anything specific she did expressively, she responded, "You know, I guess I just don't like thinking about it. I want to just be myself." One of her greatest strengths, she felt, was her capacity to connect with children without thinking. "I have no idea why I am able to connect with kids," she said. "I don't do it purposefully.…I just *love* the kids here, all the time, every kid." Implicit here is the belief that Ms. Reid's ability to connect with children had little to do with specific premeditated ways of speaking, moving, or otherwise using expressive behaviors, but rather emerged naturally and instinctively from her genuine love for children.

When similarly asked, "Are you ever feeling like you are performing with kids, like you're doing something specific to act like a teacher?" Ms. Reid responded,

I don't feel like that's who I am, being 'teachery,' I don't feel like that's who I am as a person so it's hard to stay in character. I am just who I am with them and that seems to work great most of the time.

Again, Ms. Reid's comment underscores her belief that she acted with children in ways that just naturally "work great." This seemed to be, for her, a point of pride.

Over the course of this study, however, Ms. Reid grew more aware of certain expressive behaviors—or at least more willing to talk about them. At one point she remarked, "I think you [the researcher] asked me about my facial expressions once, and now in my head I say I wonder if I *am* doing this on purpose." In fact, by the end of the study, Ms. Reid admitted she sometimes felt she was doing what she called "acting" with children, such as when she made a conscious effort to appear excited about the content or about children's ideas when really, she felt the opposite. For example, in response to the question, "Now that we've been talking so much about specific ways you use things like voice or body, is there anything you're more aware of?" she said, "You know, sometimes I do have to pretend, or I guess act a little, like about certain things. Like maybe I actually think what we're doing is boring but I need to act like I don't."

Regardless of this small admission of intentionality in her expressive behaviors, Ms. Reid remained largely resistant to considering the impact of the expressive dimensions of her work on her teaching or relationships with children. "Why do you think things like facial expression or body language might matter?" she was asked. In response, she said, "I'm really not sure, or not sure of why it might be good to be aware of them all the time like that. I'm still not so conscious of it. I'm a *little* aware of that kind of stuff. A *little* bit."

Like Ms. Reid, Ms. Martin questioned the extent any intentionality in her expressive behaviors mattered. When commenting generally on the different ways teachers might use voice, body language, and other expressive behaviors—and about the topic of this study more broadly—she said, "I don't know that you're going to find something. I just think, I don't know if it's replicable." Rather, Ms. Martin felt that she and other teachers likely acted with children in ways that were expressively unique and idiosyncratic, similar to how they engaged with people in other aspects of their life. When asked what she meant by the statement "I don't know if it's replicable," Ms. Martin said,

Well I know I try to be myself with kids, and they really respond to that. They want to know you're being real with them and that you mean what you say and that you probably

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feel that way. And I bet others probably do the same and are just being themselves or doing what they know how to do.

As her comment implies, Ms. Martin felt that the ways she (and other teachers) instinctively behaved with children were good enough. Further, like Ms. Williams, she seemed to believe that when teachers were more intentional in their expressive behaviors, children might interpret their relational overtures as inauthentic. Instead, Ms. Martin seemed to feel that how she engaged expressively with children was integrally tied to her identity, experience and habit—and that it was a good thing.

Ms. Martin felt that even when more than one teacher acted in similar ways through their expressive behaviors, those similarities could be attributed to teachers' shared values and experiences. This is illustrated below, in her speculations about this study:

Let's say you [the researcher] *do* find some patterns. You find some commonality. Like, these teachers are all doing X. Is that a function of something that can be taught or is it a function of who we are and that's why we're better or doing well? Like, are we doing well because we do those things or do we do those things because of who we are? Is it a part of me? Like, are those things personality traits of mine? Are these things me as a person or me as a teacher? I think probably as a person. I'm pretty sure I *always* use my hands every time I am talking to everyone. I am Italian after all.

This comment suggests Ms. Martin's skepticism about teachers' capacity to learn expressive behaviors that run counter to the ways they typically engage with people in other contexts. Her words also communicate her reluctance to separate who she was "as a person" and her role and behaviors as "a teacher." For her, these roles were indistinguishable. As a result, Ms. Martin was often disinclined to explicitly name or reflect on her expressive behaviors. Still, as will be discussed later in the chapter, she nevertheless alluded to specific dimensions of her *persona work* off-handedly and without, seemingly, realizing it, such as during more general conversations about her teaching practice.

Looking across teachers' broad conceptions about *persona work*. Participating teachers spoke with varying levels of comfort about the expressive dimensions of their teaching practice. Some, like Ms. Voss and Ms. Lombardi, were accustomed to thinking about expressive behaviors and demeanors. They felt the expressive domain was important and impactful on many other aspects of teaching and learning. Others, like Ms. Reid and Ms. Martin, were at least

initially uncomfortable with the idea of *persona work*. Their comments suggested that the idea of intentionality around *persona work* worried them, or made them feel they were behaving and interacting with children in ways that were inauthentic or disingenuous.

Despite variations in how they broadly talked or thought about *persona work*, there were also similarities across participating teachers' talk. For example, none of these teachers was consistently able to describe their expressive behaviors and their effects—not even Ms. Voss and Ms. Lombardi. Further, few of these teachers conceived of *persona work* as something they did all the time in the classroom. Many, for example, did not seem to believe their "everyday," habitual expressive behaviors also counted as part of their *persona work* and impacted their instruction and relationships with children. Rather, for most of these teachers, enacting *persona work* entailed doing something expressively *different* from what they might in other interactional settings outside the classroom.

I have argued in this study that teachers' expressive behaviors are always present and visible regardless of their intentionality in using them. As such, expressive behaviors have the potential to influence children and impact instruction whether teachers mean them to or not. The fact that these teachers were only unevenly aware of their *persona work* is therefore troubling. As we will see later in the chapter, it means they might not always have been sensitive to important (and inequitable) patterns in their expressive behaviors and to the correlations between those patterns and their own biases, habits and preferences. I revisit these ideas at the end of the chapter.

Teachers' Purposes for *Persona Work*

When the teachers were asked explicitly about their expressive behaviors (e.g., "Tell me how you use your voice in the classroom"), most had trouble generating examples. But when asked to talk about what they thought went well or badly in a specific lesson, about their relationships with children or their instructional goals, or about other more general aspects of their teaching work, their references to expressive behaviors often flowed easily and automatically. In other words, teachers' references to expressive behaviors typically emerged organically, and often subconsciously, in their broader talk about teaching.

Their lack of direct reference of expressive behaviors may be because teachers' *persona work* was so central to and tied up in the larger instructional and relational dimensions of their

teaching practice, it was hard for them to notice or parse their expressive behaviors. It may also have been that teachers' use of expressive behaviors had become, at this later point in their careers, largely automatic and internalized. As Ms. Lombardi put it, "Probably now they're [expressive behaviors] so ingrained I can't even pinpoint them unless you ask me what else I was doing or *why* I did it…It's just who I am."

All teachers, in other words, could provide examples of how they used voice, body language, and other resources of *self* when carrying out the work of teaching. Yet, for many of these teachers, their references to expressive behaviors seemed to emerge, in large part, unconsciously, introduced automatically and without thought into conversation while teachers spoke of their instructional goals, their relationships with children, or other more general parts of teaching.

Given the tacit nature of *persona work* for many of the teachers participating in the study, watching video of themselves was helpful for encouraging them to recall and describe their expressive behaviors. Video seemed to trigger their memories about what they were thinking at the time they used different kinds of *persona work*, such as why they might have moved, spoken or otherwise engaged aspects of *self* in different ways. In one such video recall session, for instance, Ms. Reid—who generally had trouble naming any expressive behaviors out of context—explicitly referenced several aspects of her *persona work*, such as by pointing out things she did with her face and voice. "Oh yeah!" she exclaimed while watching herself listen and respond to questions from children after she had given an explanation. "I will answer *every* question that is ever put to me. I'm like, I'm taking them *really seriously* in my voice, with my face, because what if it is a serious question?"

Across participating teachers' references to *persona work*—direct or oblique—emerged several themes. In general, the participating teachers' allusions to specific expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns often occurred in moments they felt they did something expressively *different* than they normally might. For example, as will be described below, many teachers were aware of times they moved differently they would in other contexts, or were especially attentive to times they spoke more loudly or softly than they typically did elsewhere. Additionally, teachers' references to expressive behaviors often pertained to moments they abstained from doing something they instinctively wanted to do. For example, the sections below will show that teachers frequently recalled times they felt themselves holding back instinctive feelings of anger

or frustration when engaging with children or hiding such feelings in their expressive performances.

Nearly every expressive example these teachers provided was also about the larger purpose of exerting "control" over classroom interaction. Specifically, most of the teachers' references to *persona work* came in moments they described ways they directed, managed, influenced, manipulated, and otherwise controlled themselves, the children, the content, and the broader classroom environment. "Control" was, therefore, the primary means through which teachers' spoke of expressively orchestrating classroom interaction using their *persona work*.

In the sections that follow, I look more closely at these ideas. First, I summarize what teachers meant by expressive control and what it entailed. Next, I describe ways teachers exerted expressive control over different interactional conditions depicted in the "instructional triangle" (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003) related to the classroom environment, the children's interest and connection, the content and intellectual conditions of the classroom, and the teachers themselves. For an overview of this section, see Figure 5.3.
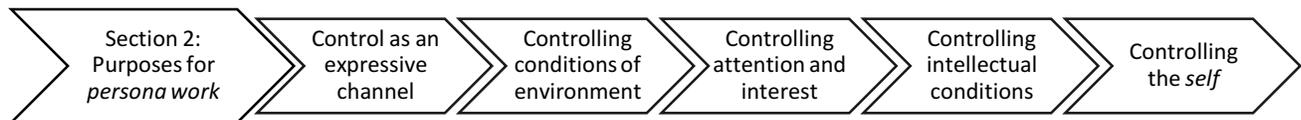
Figure 5.3. *Conceptual map, Section 2 ("Teachers' Purposes for* Persona Work*")*

"Control" as Teachers' Primary Expressive Channel for Orchestrating Interactions

In the previous chapter, I speculated there were many ways in which teachers might orchestrate classroom interaction through their *persona work*. For the teachers participating in this study, it seemed the primary expressive channel they employed to do so was "control." In fact, many of the teachers themselves used this word to describe what they hoped to accomplish through their expressive behaviors, either in relation to themselves or over interactional conditions in the classroom more broadly.

For example, when explaining how she monitored children during group work, Ms. Eichner said, "It is important to try to keep control so you always know what they're doing, but also make sure they have fun." In another example, in response to the question, "What do you think is initially really hard for teachers?" Ms. Voss said, "Knowing that they need to stay in charge and in control even when they want kids to have a good time or like them." In a third

example, Ms. Lombardi (as we saw earlier) spoke of the importance of crafting a "presence" in the classroom to "get control, get respect, [and] get going."

The teachers appeared to view "control" as something they continually needed to exert over children, a necessary ingredient for accomplishing anything else in the classroom. Especially when it came to connecting with, engaging, or having fun with children, it seemed for these teachers that control came first and took precedent. Elaborating on her point about novice teachers above, for example, Ms. Voss explained it this way:

> With new teachers, they want to be their [students'] friend. They're afraid kids won't like them. Just too flipping bad. There are going to be kids that don't like you, and yeah, it's hard but—[shrugs]. And then the parents come in and say, "My kid told me this, this, and this and they don't like you and I don't either.…But I say, have a routine. I have a routine and stick to it. You cannot make up the rules as you go along because the kids can't handle that. They will take advantage, and it's not because they want to. It's because they want to see what they can get away with because they want structure. And they need that structure. But you need to do it lovingly…. And they may get angry with you and may hate you, they may *say* they hate you. But they really don't. And if they do, they'll learn something anyway. That's why it's really important to keep at it, to keep control.

According to Ms. Voss, without control there is no structure or routine in the classroom and children "will take advantage." Control is, therefore, critical for teachers to accomplish anything instructionally or relationally. Ms. Voss also positioned the idea of connection, friendship, or what she calls being "liked" in opposition to "control" and teachers' larger instructional imperative. As she put it in her comment above, it is just "too flipping bad" when children (or their parents) do not like teachers. "They'll [the students] learn something anyway," she said. Yet, her comment also suggested her belief that through routine, structure, and control, teachers could *additionally* foster connections in the classroom with children, such as by "lovingly" imposing structure on classroom interactions that helped them feel safe.

Ms. Reid also sometimes placed the idea of "connection" with children or the idea of students "liking" her in opposition to her instructional and organizational goals. When describing her students, for example, she said of them,

> Well, they're middle schoolers. That's why if I see on something, like Facebook, they say they hate me I know in two days they're probably going to love me…so I try not to let it

get to me too much because I want my students to like me and if they don't, well I tell them, "You don't have to like me but you have to accept the policy and do the work." You know, I'd *rather* they like me and I'd *rather* we get along but that's not my main focus.

Evident in this comment, children's "liking" of Ms. Reid was not her "main focus." Rather, similar to Ms. Voss, she implied it was subsidiary to her charge of ensuring that children "accept the policy and do the work." Ms. Reid's primary concern, therefore, appeared to be the extent to which she could influence, direct, manage, and otherwise control the ways in which children operated inside the organizational and intellectual space in the classroom. It was not, in contrast, about connecting with children and ensuring that they "liked" her—even though certainly she *wanted* them to.

Interestingly, many participating teachers did believe that personal connection and "liking" were *children's* primary aims for classroom interaction. For example, in response to the question, "What do you think the most important thing is for the kids in the class?" Ms. Voss said,

And at this grade level, I think more than anything they—it's all about connections and the personal stuff. When we used to teach 3-4 and 5-6 [two grade bands at her former school] it was real interesting because when our student teachers would leave and the children would write them letters of recommendation, third and fourth graders wrote these letters about "my teacher did this unit" and "they taught about this" and "they always looked pretty" and "they said this" and whatever. And for the fifth and sixth graders, it was all about how they [the student teachers] *interacted* with them. "They talked to me," "they smiled at me," "they took the time to listen to what I had to say." It was *personal*. It was, like, *across the board*. And you could see this huge shift between those grades. And then when we did the 6-7-8 [grade band] you could just really tell. With those older kids, the older they got, it doesn't matter what you teach. It was, do they know that you [the teacher] like them, if they know you care, if they know that you're being fair.

According to Ms. Voss, especially middle schoolers needed to know that teachers liked them and had positive regard for students and their learning. Feeling connected in their interactions with the teacher was critical for these children. Without such connection, Ms. Voss' comment implied

that children did not want to engage or do the work. However, as described above, Ms. Voss herself nevertheless appeared to prioritize structure, rules, and other forms of control over establishing personal connection—or, more accurately, she felt that her connection with children would emerge *from* her structure and control.

In another example, in response to the question, "What do you think is most critical for students?" Ms. Eichner said, "I think that relationship piece is. It *is* the key. It may be why some of the kids in the class tolerate me when I get mad or crazy. And don't hold it against me." Here, Ms. Eichner emphasized the central importance of relationships (between children and the teacher) in the classroom—at least for the students themselves. Her comment foreshadowed an idea that will be unpacked more fully in the next chapter. Namely, it implies that some amount of connection may actually be necessary to ensure teachers' control is productive and positive for all children, and to convince children to forgive teachers' *losses* in expressive control.

Yet, when referring her own "connections" with children, Ms. Eichner also talked about the larger role connection plays in convincing children to learn, to follow her rules, and to otherwise engage in class in the ways she desired. For example, she described using "connection" strategically in reference to one of her morning classes, saying,

> Well, in the beginning of the year they [the students in that class] rubbed me the wrong way. So, I had to teach myself, if you are trying to get them to do anything, you have to come across a certain way. Like a lot of times it's like, remember to *smile* as you redirect, remember to *laugh*, you are going to tell a *joke* now—and all so you can connect to set the expectation of what you are looking for and get them to listen.

Here, Ms. Eichner fostered connection with children through her expressive behaviors (e.g., smiling at them) not simply because she knew students valued such manifestations of connection and care, but as a way to help her accomplish her instructional goals or, as she put it, to "get them to listen."

In general, across participating teachers' comments it seemed that even when teachers talked about fostering connections with children, it was in service of their broader aim of maintaining "control" through their expressive behaviors. Historically in the research in education (and beyond), however, "control" in the classroom has been written about as a threat or a problem (e.g., Darder, 1991; Denscombe, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2015; Raby, 2012). For example,

there are many well-documented examples of the ways teachers and schools repress children and constrain their opportunities in ways that are unjust and harmful through the control they exert.

In contrast, the teachers in this study appeared to have a more neutral understanding of "control." For them, the construct of control appeared to be a necessary force in schools, something they needed to utilize in order to help children navigate the crowds and chaos of the classroom and lend clarity, direction, and cohesion to their instruction. Expressive control was, for them, about shaping and managing the ways children physically operated within the classroom space, about directing and maintaining students' intellectual attention, about modeling norms for communication and interaction, and otherwise about imposing guidance, structure, and routine on classroom interaction—ostensibly to help children learn. In fact, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the teachers were often blind to any inequities or injustice implicit in their expressive control over some or all children. Rather, they seemed to assume their control typically functioned equally well for all children, and was largely beneficial for everyone.

In this and the following sections, I explore these ideas. I begin below by describing the ways teachers talked about using *persona work* to expressively control each of the conditions of classroom interaction related to the environment and physical space, children's minds and attention, the intellectual space and content, and the teachers themselves. Later in the chapter I also examine how teachers spoke of "losing" control of themselves, and I describe important patterns apparent in their expressive losses of control.

Controlling Environmental Conditions and the Physical Space

There were several ways teachers referenced exerting control over and monitoring the classroom environment—and specifically controlling children's movements and interactions within that environment—through their *persona work*. One way they talked about doing so was by using expressive behaviors in ways designed to make them appear more visible to children and to give the impression they saw and heard everything children did. For example, in response to the question, "What is one piece of advice you would give to new teachers?" Ms. Voss responded,

> Always be scanning your audience. New teachers become so focused, and they'll choose
> somebody who is smiling at them or those kids who are going like this [smiles and nods]
> and are going to give them that positive feedback. But you know what? You're the
> teacher. You don't need the positive feedback…. Look for those kids that aren't going to

give it to you, who are going to hide, leaning back in their chair and slipping under the table before you know it. Who are going to just check out. If they know that your eyes are going to be on them, then they won't do that."

In her comment, Ms. Voss referred to the idea of physically "scanning your audience." She cautioned especially new teachers to make pointed eye contact not merely with children who were looking back at them, but also with those who appeared less attentive or responsive, or "who are going to hide." "Scanning" therefore acted as a tool for systematically capturing or reengaging children's focus, a continual reminder of and guide for what children should be doing during instruction.

Ms. Voss also suggested the importance of what she called "using your whole stage" (i.e., the classroom) during instruction, such as by teaching from many different locations in the room. She argued that doing so helped teachers maintain order and ensured that children were complying with her rules and demands. For example, in response to the question, "What is one thing you do to help children stay focused and interested?" she replied,

Well, it's use your whole stage. If I'm talking over here and I've got student 1 and student 2 over there, I'm going to walk over there. And I might talk next to this third student here. I have stools spread out across the front because I might want to be over here and over there and over here. And with sixth grade I'm everywhere…. If I put out a fire over here these people think they can talk. Wherever you're *not*. So, you've got to use the whole stage.

Just as Ms. Voss described using her gaze to methodically ensure all children were doing what she wanted them to do in any given moment of instruction, here she also discussed using her body to help control children's focus and their activities within the broader classroom space. As her comment implied, by standing or sitting near children, Ms. Voss felt it more likely they would recall and comply with her expectations for them. She argued for the importance of using "the whole stage" so that children never felt they could start what she called "fires," characterized by doing or saying things she deemed undesirable.

Ms. Lombardi also talked about "scanning" with her eyes and leveraging her physical presence to be more visible to children and therefore to monitor and direct children's behavior in the classroom space. She said, in response to the question "Are there things you always do when you teach that help you?" the following:

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I have to scan, all the time. It is almost like very systematic. And I have to sit up, because I'm short, to do it. It is like I'm always preparing myself for what's coming next, like moment-to-moment behavior things…. I don't even notice I do it anymore because it's such a natural thing that I *have* to do, I *have* to know what they're doing. It's getting to be the end of the year feeling, and that's a really hard time to keep them reined in. So, I'm always looking at them and reminding them with that.

Similar to Ms. Voss, for Ms. Lombardi systematic scanning and "sitting up" seemed to be about making herself more visible. Her comment associated these expressive behaviors with both monitoring and correcting children's behavior. These moves were, in other words, about keeping children "reined in" and compliant, and about ensuring their attention was primarily on Ms. Lombardi herself.

Ms. Reid also referenced ways she scanned the room to ensure children were focused and attending to her and the lesson. She called this "a public speaking kind of thing." Specifically, in response to the question, "Are there certain things you always do when giving directions or monitoring children in the classroom?" she said,

Well, I always say, "Eyes and ears up here!" And I look around. And then I say, "I want to see your eyes!" And I'll look around more and see if they're all looking up, because I feel if they're looking at you, then they're paying attention mostly. And I do a public speaking kind of thing: I'll do the whole thing where I'm scanning around the room, making sure it looks like I'm talking to everybody.

As with the other teachers, Ms. Reid's scanning of the room was meant to ensure children were operating in desirable ways within the classroom space. She talked about using her gaze to check if students were attending and understanding, for example, but also about making eye contact to *influence* students' focus in cases when she felt their attention was elsewhere.

In addition to using gaze as a way to maintain and monitor children's focus and compliance, some teachers also talked about using their physical placement or movement throughout the room to do so. In response to the question, "How do you decide where in the room to teach from?" Ms. Eichner said,

Where I'm standing in relationship to the instruction is intentional. I experiment with different things, like I went to one [professional development] session that said you

always praise kids from one part of the room and you always redirect or discipline from

another– you'll need to go to that place and they will know. So that's what I do.

Ms. Eichner used her physical presence as a visible reminder to children of what they ought to be doing. As she described here, by simply moving to one part of the room or another, she tried to shape and influence children's behavior. Depending on where she stood, she hoped children would just "know" when they did something she deemed right or wrong and would self-correct accordingly.

Ms. Lombardi also reported using her physical positioning to send signals about her intentions and to manage children's behavior and attention. For example, in response to the question, "Is there anything you typically do to show you're feeling different ways during class?" she said,

Well, one thing is if I stand near my desk, near the door, near the lights, it's usually

because I'm going to talk to them about something that's serious. That's my spot in the

room where if I need to shut off the lights I'm going to shut them off. Sometimes now I

can even just stand by the lights and change my tone of voice and they know. It's time.

Similar to Ms. Eichner, Ms. Lombardi here talked about using her physical placement in the room to communicate to children something about her mood and intention. For example, simply by standing in a particular spot and changing her voice, she said the children just "know." They intuited her disapproval, or that she planned to engage with them seriously.

Ms. Williams used her physical placement in the room in a different way to control children's attention and focus. When describing her circulation throughout the room, she said all she needed to do to get children to return to their desks and focus on their work was to walk towards them. She said,

My movement helps some kids stay focused and on. Because they know I'm moving so

they can see where I am. Or I'll go up those aisles when I'm checking in on those small

groups and making sure they're on track. Sometimes I'm like a "negative magnet." If

kids aren't where they are supposed to be or are off task, all I need to do is walk to them

and then they whip around and walk in the other direction and get back to work.

Like the other teachers, Ms. Williams acknowledged a correlation between where she stood in the class—and specifically, in this case, where she stood in relation to the children themselves— and students' focus. It seemed that Ms. Williams' proximity to students typically did not appear

to make children reengage with *her*, the teacher. Rather, as illustrated by her description of herself as a "negative magnet," at least some children seemed more inclined to move *away* from her when she approached. In this sense, Ms. Williams' physical placement in the classroom appeared to function somewhat differently than that of some of the other teachers, whose physical proximity to children more typically seemed to help connect children positively to the teachers themselves.

Until now, this category has largely related to ways teachers used expressive behaviors to help them monitor and manage children's physical behaviors and wrangle the broader focus and activities of the group. Additionally, some of the teachers also referred to ways they used aspects of *persona* to help them establish, model, and remind children of communication norms for the classroom environment.

For example, Ms. Martin said she purposefully addressed children by their academic or social roles at different points during instruction, such as by calling them "readers" or "listeners."

> I never say, like, "kids." Or *maybe* every once in a while, I say "class." But I say "listeners" when I need them to listen, "readers" when they're reading, "writers" when they're writing, "researchers" when they're researching and so on and so forth. It gets them going and helps them remember what to do. And then they will maybe think of themselves that way too.

Ms. Martin referred here to using labels like "readers" or "listeners" as reminders for how she wanted children to engage with one another and for what she wanted them to do within the larger intellectual and relational space of the classroom. She also implied that these forms of address might be internalized by children and therefore might positively children's self-concepts (e.g., "they will maybe think of themselves that way too").

Like Ms. Martin, Ms. Lombardi was also intentional about the language she used with children, and she also tried to control children's own discourse in the classrooms. In response to the question, "Is there anything you try to do with how children talk in class?" she said,

> I have to tell them at the beginning of every school year just be intentional about, "You're in English class, you're trying to prove to your teacher that you are speaking proper grammar and sounding like an intelligent English speaker and please use your most formal language in class." I think I'm more strict about it in the beginning of the year when it can revert back to slang but if they are talking directly to me or directly to

the class then it is formal…. But when I'm joking with them or, you know, we haven't started yet or it is only one person at my table and we are waiting for the other students, then I might just speak informally or use my own expressions. But I try to show them in my words or the way I say things how we need to use what I called proper English and that we speak in certain ways in here.

In this comment, Ms. Lombardi talked about using her own word choice and expressions and, as she put it, "the way I say things" to model for children the discursive norms of the classroom. Specifically, she described how she purposefully adopted different ways of talking with children, depending on what was happening in class instructionally. She verbally performed for children examples of when it was appropriate to use "formal" or "informal" speech and expressions, and what such discourse might sound like.

However, by asking the children to sound like an "intelligent English speaker," Ms. Lombardi also positioned what she called children's "slang" and other discursive patterns and preferences they brought with them to class as inferior. She placed what she called children's "slang" in direct opposition to the "proper English" required by school and, ostensibly, used by Ms. Lombardi herself. In other words, by using aspects of her *persona* to model "proper" and "informal" ways of speaking for her students—most of whom were Black—Ms. Lombardi shaped the discursive norms in the classroom to coincide with a specific vision of what did and did not count as "appropriate" talk. Further, it so happened that the nature of those discursive norms coincided culturally with her *own* learned and habitual ways of communicating rather than with the communication norms and patterns among many of her students.

This section has described two primary ways teachers talked about using aspects *persona work* to help them shape and control conditions related to the classroom environment. Teachers recounted ways they leveraged expressive behaviors to help them control the physical space and how children operated within it, such as by monitoring and correcting children's placement in the room and their behaviors through gaze or gesture. Teachers also described how they used verbal expressive behaviors (e.g., word choice, intonation) to model and manage discursive norms in the classroom in ways meant to control children's talk or self-concept. The next section expands this theme of control to describe ways these teachers also used expressive behaviors to control children's attention and engagement in class.

Controlling Conditions Related to Children's Attention and Interest

In addition to using *persona work* to control and monitor the physical and linguistic norms in the classroom environment, teachers also described using expressive behaviors to shape children's attention, interest, and sense of connectedness with the class. Specifically, the teachers referred both to ways they used *persona work* to maintain children's attention and focus, and also to *inspire* it.

For example, Ms. Martin said she purposefully used her voice to redirect students' attention when it wandered. She described it this way:

> I do notice that if I'm speaking normally and continuously and they start to not hear and if I add in "listeners" as an interjection in the middle of that sentence that starts to pull them back. Or if I say a kid's name – '*blah blah blah*, Brannon, *blah blah blah*' — just smack dab in the middle of my sentence, that generally is effective.

In another example, when asked, "Are there ways you try to capture kids' attention, like if the class is really loud or if it is a transition?" Ms. Reid said,

> There have been times when I say to myself, I wonder if I talk really softly like this I'll get people's attention. And they [students] want to know what I have to say so they stop talking so they can listen…. And on other times, I just think to myself I am just going to sit here and watch them interact for a second. So, I will just sit in that chair and watch them, like really obviously *watch* them, and they get quieter than they've ever been. It just works for some reason, I don't know why, me just sitting there and everybody gets in their seats, everybody gets quiet, until they are just not saying anything and watching me back. Whenever I do that I can't help it, I go to them, "What just happened here!?" And I don't think they know either. But it only works if I do it sporadically. It's a different thing and I think they notice when I'm doing something different.

In her comment, Ms. Reid highlighted several ways she used *persona work* to capture children's interest and focus. Rather than using specific words or playing with the volume of her voice, she described how she engaged children's attention by remaining still and quiet and adopting a watchful, expectant expression. She also flagged here the power of doing something expressively *different* in her *persona work* for generating a desired response from her students (i.e., "I think they notice when I'm doing something different"), rather than continuing to speak or move in the same ways she always did.

In addition to describing how they used *persona work* to engage children's attention and interest, some teachers also referenced times they purposefully used expressive behaviors to help divert or refocus children's attention—especially away from the teachers themselves. For example, in response to the question, "How do you make sure you can have private conversations with children if you need to even when you're teaching everyone?" Ms. Williams said,

> Well, I know it seems so basic but I can just crouch down and whisper something to one person even when I'm talking to the whole class, and if I do it fast it doesn't really get in the way of what I was doing with everyone and it isn't that distracting.

In this comment, Ms. Williams alluded to changing her physical level in the room (e.g., by crouching down) to remove herself from the majority of students' sightline. Doing so helped facilitate a quick and private exchange with an individual child even in the middle of whole class instruction. Her comment here implied that had she *not* done so, and had instead engaged in her "private conversation" in full view of the rest of the class, the personal exchange would not only have been less private for the individual child, but also would have been what she called "distracting" for other students in the class.

When answering the same question, Ms. Martin made a similar reference to her physical positioning:

> Maybe it's not so much about private conversations, but if I don't want the kids to pay attention to me I might just sit at one of their desks. I could do this during group presentations so I make sure they are looking at the other kids and not at me.

Like Ms. Williams, Ms. Martin referred to removing herself from children's sight as a technique for directing their attention *away* from her. However, she justified doing so not to enable a quick private exchange with one child, but to help shift the attention and focus of the whole class elsewhere. By sitting at one of the student's desks, she removed herself from the center of attention and created a space where children might focus on other students in the room.

Likewise, Ms. Reid described how she sometimes removed herself from the center of the room while children engaged in group work, in hopes of encouraging children to approach her individually. In response to the prompt, "I noticed you decided to work with children at your desk today rather than at theirs. Could you talk about that?" she said,

Oh, well, sometimes I'll walk around but they [the children] sometimes don't want to ask questions *around* everybody, so sometimes I'll just sit here and hang out at my desk like I'm doing something and then they come up to me, like if they don't feel like they want to ask their questions around other people.

Here, Ms. Reid explained how removing herself from a visible location in the room encouraged children to engage with her who otherwise might not have felt comfortable doing so. Again, therefore, her peripheral physical placement in the room appeared to help direct children's attention *away* from her and allowed her to conduct private interactions with individual children.

As many of the teachers' comments implied, they were often aware of ways they captured, directed, maintained, and even lost children's attention, interest, and focus during class, and of the relationship between this and their *persona work*. These themes are carried into the next section, which similarly describes ways teachers used expressive behaviors to control and shape students' attention, but does so specifically in relation to the academic content.

Controlling the Content and Intellectual Conditions of the Classroom

Many teachers said they purposefully used expressive behaviors like voice or expression to highlight important aspects of the subject matter, to help them model learning behaviors, or to spark children's interest in relation to the content. For example, in response to the question, "Is there anything that is a useful technique when explaining things to kids?" Ms. Martin said she intentionally paused in her explanations to give children time to process her words. She said, "I try to talk slowly with pauses to give them some time to digest." Ms. Martin also said she tried to vary her intonation to make her explanations more interesting. "You don't want to be like Ferris Bueller," she laughed, alluding to the high school film that features a teacher who speaks in such a dull, nasal drone that it puts many students to sleep and prompts the lead character, Ferris Bueller, to cut school for the day.

Further, Ms. Martin worried that the longer she talked, the more likely she would be to lose children's attention and interest in relation to the academic content. In one example of this, after watching a video clip of herself explaining a poem to her students, she said, "Sometimes I cannot pause between words for fear that they [the children] will start talking. So, I have to know that I've got them pretty captive to know to speak slowly." Relatedly, as was mentioned earlier in the chapter, Ms. Eichner also said that during long lectures, it was important to talk in ways that were fun, exciting, or otherwise—as she called it— "catching," rather than as if she was

"reading from a script," such as by speaking in a way that was not only dull, but which also did not take children's responses into account.

In response to the question, "Are there things you do on purpose when teaching kids new ideas?" Ms. Lombardi also said she used her voice to draw children's attention to different ideas. "I know I change my voice when I'm about to make a different point," said Ms. Lombardi. "I slow down and get more serious when I'm like, 'Come on, think about it. Think about if this was *you*' kind of thing. I know I do it." Ms. Lombardi also implied that she changed her voice and manner to match the underlying mood of what it was she taught or the general tone of the lesson. For example, when asked, "If you are having a serious conversation with children do you try to look serious?" she responded,

> I always want to do that, yes. I want to lower my voice, and I do, and I want to pause and make those pauses natural so that they [the students] have time to think about what I'm saying. And then, you know, the adverse of that is when we're having something that's a lot more light and fun and exciting I want to invigorate that with those kinds of levels of energy."

In a different example, Ms. Reid said she commonly repeated words to get directions and explanations across to children in ways that would interest them, and which would help students remember the ideas of the lesson. For example, in response to the question, "What is something you try to do when giving directions to kids?" she said,

> I think I'm very slow and deliberate and making sure they're watching and then I'll say, let me just say this again. And I'll say it again and then I'll say, just in case you were wondering, and I'll try to make it funny, and I'll say it one more time.

Ms. Reid laughed as she shared this strategy, shaking her head in chagrin. Some of her students, she said, never seemed to know or remember what to do, no matter how explicit she was. To compensate for this, she said she had to learn over the years simply to say things repeatedly in different voices, in hopes that eventually something would "click" for children.

Participating teachers seemed especially aware of how they used their *persona work* to manage children's attention in relation to the content while facilitating participation among the whole class. One way they talked of doing so related to their facilitation of small exchanges with individual children during whole class discussions, such as when the teachers asked individual children follow-up questions about their comments or otherwise responded to children's ideas.

The teachers worried that such one-on-one public exchanges slowed the instructional momentum for the whole class and were thus distracting for the other children. They therefore talked about managing their expressive behaviors at such times in ways designed to sustain everyone's interest.

For example, Ms. Williams pointed out how talking too long with just one child during a discussion often caused the remaining children to lose attention and focus. In response to the question, "Is there anything you are thinking about or doing when children are talking?" she said,

> It's just a crime to every student you interact with. But, as I'm listening to this child, as I'm listening to this story, if I'm not careful, I'll lose the rest of the class. So, I'm like, okay, move it along a little.

Similarly, Ms. Lombardi felt that engaging in too many asides with individual children when she was also teaching the whole class would disrupt the momentum and coherence of her instruction and lead other children to disengage. After watching a video clip of herself interacting with different children during a whole group lesson, for example, she said,

> When they interrupt me, and ask me questions at times like this I'm often quick with my answers because I don't know how fast I'm going to have to intervene with someone else in the room who might not get it. So, my normal responses I would give are quick and terse. Because I feel like I always have to be focusing my attention elsewhere.

Like Ms. Williams, Ms. Lombardi was conscious of the speed at which she talked and the total length of time she interacted with individuals during whole class instruction. As she put it, she was "quick with her answers," and this "quickness" was evident not just in her choice of words, but in her brusque tone.

Ms. Reid also worried about sustaining children's attention during whole class discussions. She was more concerned about children's loss of focus while listening to other children talk, rather than while listening to the teachers *respond* to that talk. She felt this could be especially problematic when individual students' contributions to the discussion were confusing, unfocused or overly lengthy. "Sometimes they've been talking a *really* long time," she said, "and I wish they would stop. And I can tell everyone *else* wants them to stop too." To solve this problem, Ms. Reid talked about often having to speed children along through her expressive behaviors, or of having to work hard to redirect children's attention back to herself or the content after students finished speaking. Of this she said,

Sometimes they just need to wrap it up. Because then when they're done, I worry I've lost everyone else so sometimes I feel like I have to talk even louder or do something funny with my arms or something—you know, like this [she waves her arms]—to get them back and interested after having to have listened to that one kid for so long.

In contrast to these examples, which illustrated many teachers' worry that children's individual contributions or teachers' responses to students during whole class discussion would derail the academic focus or momentum of the group, Ms. Voss and Ms. Eichner in particular also expressed their feeling that it was still important to acknowledge every child's *intention* to speak or engage with the content. Doing so, they argued, helped make children feel more connected. For example, when describing her strategies for leading class discussions, Ms. Voss said,

There are some children that are going to always have their hands up and they know I can't call on them, and so we have this symbol [demonstrates hand gesture]. You've seen it in here. It means "I was going to say the same thing." And that's something I teach them the first day because I don't want them to think—I want them to *know* I notice. So, when I see it I try to point to them and look at them and say, "You were going to say the same thing." Because they have *so much* to say.

While Ms. Voss realized here that not all children who wanted to share ideas could conceivably do so in the time allotted, she argued it was important nevertheless to communicate to them that she noticed them. As she put it, "I want them to know I notice." When she saw students gesturing that they had a similar idea, she used her own expressive behaviors to acknowledge them both verbally and nonverbally.

Similarly, in response to the question, "Do you have to teach children differently, depending on who they are?" Ms. Eichner said,

I think so. Because there are certain kids and I know I can just acknowledge their ideas from across the room, or just with a quick look or signal, and then there are certain kids that need me to kneel down in front of their desks to know I heard them or that I think they're smart.

Implicit in the comments of both Ms. Voss and Ms. Eichner is the idea that teachers need to use expressive behaviors not just to activate and maintain children's attention, but also to communicate the teacher's *own* regard and attention, especially in relation to children's thinking.

Doing so, their comments implied, helps children *want* to learn and engage with the teacher and the class.

Controlling the *Self* (i.e., the Teacher)

In addition to citing expressive behaviors when they talked about controlling interactional conditions related to children, the environment, and the content, participating teachers frequently referred to moments they had to control their *own* expressive displays. In other words, they also talked about controlling themselves. Specifically, the teachers referred to purposefully masking personal feelings of anxiety, fear, or dislike, of needing to hide or manipulate instinctive expressive reactions, or of fabricating or manipulating details from their "personal" lives during instruction to better connect with and instruct children.

For example, the teachers sometimes talked about being aware of times they had to work harder to put on, literally, a "good face" in their interactions with children. When reflecting on advice she sometimes told student teachers, Ms. Voss said how important it was for teachers to disguise negative emotions, and especially those that made teachers, in her words, "look weak." She said, "You show fear, you show exhaustion, they'll *eat you up*. You *have* to be an actor." Instead, she argued,

> Even if I am not liking a group of kids or not wanting to be there that day, I say to myself, I'm going to say, "I like you," and smile, and pick out every little thing that's good. Like, "Thank you so much for doing this!" "I really appreciate that!" And that's all acting.

Ms. Voss' comment implied her sense that often teachers need to be able to convey the opposite of what they feel, such as on days they have trouble mustering enough "liking" for children or have difficulty engaging with children in ways that are positive or affirming.

Ms. Reid also talked of sometimes needing to suppress her own exhaustion or other negative feelings when engaging with children, especially on days she was tired. When answering the question "Do you ever feel like things are a little harder sometimes?" she said,

> Of course, yeah. Like on days when you don't want to do—well, I always want to do it but sometimes you're just *tired* or it's the end of the day and you know it's going to be a struggle. And so, I feel I kind of have to put on the happy face. I don't feel like it's a lot but it's definitely something. My last hour is definitely my hardest hour of the day. At the end of the day you need to make a conscious effort that you don't look exhausted and,

"Oh my god you have to teach this *again*"—so I don't know if it's a performance as
much as just making more of a mental effort not to pass off that class or those moments
when I'm just done, but instead give them the same effort and appearance as I did earlier
in the day or on other days.

Whereas Ms. Voss highlighted the need for teachers to control emotions of dislike or fear, Ms.
Reid here referred to the importance of not letting exhaustion interfere with her instruction. To
mask her tiredness, she described how she intentionally doctored her outward expressive
performance, such as by "putting on the happy face."

Sometimes participating teachers also described their need to control habitual or
instinctive expressive behaviors that were not overtly negative, but which teachers felt
nevertheless interfered with their instruction and relationships with children. For example, when
responding to the question "Is there anything you typically do, like in your teaching style, as you
teach?" Ms. Lombardi said,

I talk with my hands a lot. And there was a class that told me, "Can you not talk with
your hands so much? Because it's distracting." I notice that when I get nervous, I talk
with my hands more often…. I need to sit on them to make them stop.

Similarly, Ms. Williams felt her physical movements, and specifically her habit of rapidly
walking around the room, could be distracting to children. When asked, "Are there ways you
think the way you circulate is especially helpful for kids?" she said,

Sometimes it helps some kids stay focused and *on* because they know I'm moving to
them, but sometimes I feel like a shark that's circling its victims…I know sometimes it's
very purposeful and other times I'll say, "How did I get here?"

As a result, Ms. Williams tried to be aware of her movement throughout the room, and often
tried to control it.

An additional category of control these teachers described exerting over themselves
related to their instinctive verbal and nonverbal reactions to things their students did or said. For
instance, Ms. Reid described how hard she had to work to maintain an even expression and hold
back her mirth when children asked questions she felt were "stupid." While watching herself
listen to a child on a video clip, for example, she said, "There are some times when I'm like, I
think I'm going to die laughing to that question because it's so stupid."

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Ms. Voss also talked about how she strived to hide her reactions to things children said, such as by doctoring her facial expression to render it inscrutable, especially during whole class discussions. For example, in response to the question "What were you thinking here?" while watching herself manage a discussion on video, she said,

> I try to look really blank, or deadpan. I don't want to say, "Great, I love it!" for instance, because then everybody else thinks they're wrong. So, I just want to understand what they're saying so that other people feel safe to put out a counter opinion.

Ms. Voss' comment implied her belief that, by managing her expression and ensuring it appeared "blank," she avoided giving anything away about what she was thinking or feeling. As a result, she said she avoided communicating judgement about or censure of children's ideas through her nonverbal expressive display.

Ms. Lombardi said she had to control a different form of instinctive response to students: her urge to answer her own questions or rephrase them rather than allowing children time to think and talk. She said of this,

> My first instinct when nobody answers is to right away try to rephrase the question in an easier way or in a different way. So, sometimes I am forcing myself to pause, because I know I would just want to blurt out another way to ask that question. And I still catch myself doing it. I know I did it today.

To counter her urge to "fill in" children's answers, Ms. Lombardi said she adopted certain expressive mannerisms, such as by "forcing myself to pause," which gave her something to do while waiting for children to respond, and which prevented her from responding herself. In other words, she actively managed and controlled her own expressive behaviors to facilitate children's talk.

Another, different way teachers used their *personas* to control aspects of the *self* was related to their purposeful, strategic insertion and fabrication of "personal" details while interacting with children. For example, Ms. Lombardi said she used stories about her life—many of which were not actually true—to inspire children's interest and excitement. In response to the question, "Are there ways you try to connect with children?" she said,

> One thing is, when I tell them a personal story they make a connection so that they remember something personal about the lesson. And, it's a technique, it's a strategy. It's not always true, and not everybody can do it, but I can. And if I'm a storyteller that can

get them in, and that's their draw, then I'm going to use it to get to that point…because as soon as I say I'm going to tell them a story they're like this: "Okay! Ready!" They want to know it. They want to know. It's like getting the gossip.

Here, Ms. Lombardi commented not only that she intentionally inserted (and often fabricated) personal details about herself while teaching, but that these stories helped spark children's interest and made it more likely they would remember the content.

Ms. Eichner similarly talked of inserting personal stories as "hooks" for children's intellectual engagement and to help them feel connected. When asked, "How much about your life do you reveal to kids?" she said,

I share start with something true but it may not be the whole truth. It's always in an attempt to make what we're doing more real. But now that I have kids around their age it's really easy to tell the real stories about my middle schooler not keeping it together and how this is the time of year when you have to keep it together and I know it's hard. I think the personal stories are about connection personally and connection curricular-wise.

In this example, Ms. Eichner referenced being able to draw on experiences from her own life and then exaggerate them in light of her instructional purpose. Ironically, while she claimed these personal stories were "an attempt to make what we're doing more real," they also required her to control and manipulate what she revealed about herself in ways that were at least partially artificial.

In contrast to the other teachers, Ms. Williams said she was reluctant to share too many "personal" details with children because of her identity as a gay woman. This was also described earlier in the chapter. Even so, Ms. Williams indicated the utility of selectively sharing with children some curated facets of her personal life as a way to augment her teaching. Of this she said,

I guess when I share stories I say, "my family," "at home with my family." And I do think it makes me more of a human being, so it's probably a good thing. So especially if a story has something to do with what we're doing, yes, I'll share it…. And sometimes you tell one and it just clicks. And if I'm really sure it works, I write it down and throw it into my file next year.

Here, Ms. Williams connected her personal disclosures with the broader purpose of "making her more of a human being." She felt these stories were not only instructionally useful, but that they

helped humanize her and thus made it easier for children to connect with her. In her comment Ms. Williams even highlighted how sometimes she recycled especially useful "personal" stories across different years of teaching.

In general, in their comments related to controlling aspects of the *self,* the teachers referred both to ways they had to quell their own reactions or otherwise censor themselves expressively in the classroom, and also to ways they exaggerated or inserted things about themselves (e.g., personal stories) when engaging with children. It appeared that the teachers believed that while some of their personal emotions, habits, or reactions could be useful instructionally or relationally, they also thought that other aspects of the *self* interfered with their ability to connect with or teach children. This meant also that many teachers were concerned about what would happen in moments when they *lost* expressive control. This idea is taken up below.

Maintaining and Losing Expressive Control

As I will describe in the section that follows, when recounting how they used *persona work* to manage, influence, and otherwise control classroom interaction, teachers did not differentiate the effects of their expressive behaviors on different children. Rather, they talked about their *persona work* in ways that implied they felt it was universally (and similarly) influential on all children and all classroom interaction. Teachers' descriptions of their expressive behaviors communicated the implicit message that when their *persona work* was successful, it was so for everyone, and that when they lost expressive control, that too impacted their broader capacity to control and influence every child.

Yet, when recounting specific losses of expressive control, the teachers often provided stories related to particular, rather than general, interactions with only small handfuls of children. Further, within these stories were implicit patterns related to children's race. Across all stories in which teachers described fraught interactions with their students or losses of expressive control over themselves, the children in question were students of color, and most were also Black. Given this pattern, I argue in this section that teachers' *persona work* and its effects may not have been as monolithic as teachers presumed. Rather, it appeared that in their interactions with children of color, participating teachers were more likely to struggle for expressive control over

their *persona work*, and were therefore also more likely to struggle to control classroom interactions productively for those children.

Below I share general ways teachers spoke of losing expressive control over their *persona work*. I then provide examples of the stories teachers told in relation to their losses of expressive control with children. I describe not only how these stories pertained to their interactions with children of color, but also show how the teachers were reluctant to specify or unaware of that pattern. I then contrast these uneven patterns in teachers' losses of expressive control among different groups of children with teachers' general belief about the importance of recognizing and acknowledging "difference" in the classroom and treating every child "equally." I conclude by describing and reflecting on patterns of deracialization in teachers' talk about (and use of) *persona work* in light of the racialized patterns characterizing some of the expressive dimensions of their practice and their talk about losing expressive control. For a conceptual map of this chapter, see Figure 5.3.

Section 3: Maintaining and losing expressive control → Fighting for control in *persona work* → Patterns in teachers' losses of control → Deracialization of *persona work* and control
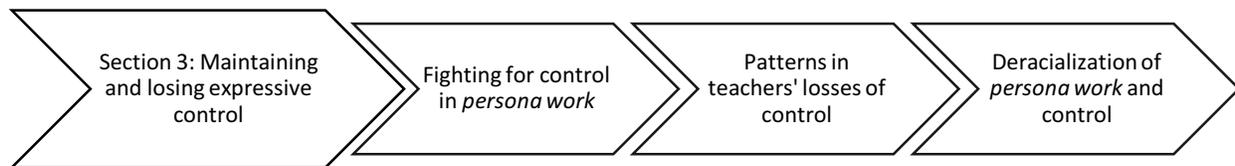
Figure 5.4. *Conceptual map, Section 3 ("Maintaining and Losing Expressive Control").*

Fighting for Control in *Persona Work*

The teachers' references to their *persona work* generally came at times they talked about actively controlling interactions in the classroom between children, the content, the environment or even their own emotions. In other words, in keeping with the findings from the previous chapter, teachers' expressive behaviors seemed to act as tools for helping teachers continually and dynamically influence the shape of classroom interaction in ways the teachers deemed most productive and useful instructionally and relationally. Specifically, they appeared to help teachers orchestrate classroom interaction through the expressive channel of "control."

Given the central role teachers' *persona work* appeared to play in controlling classroom interactions, it is not surprising that teachers also appeared to deeply fear the *loss* of control over their expressive behaviors. For example, when asked, "Is it ever hard for you to stay calm with children?" Ms. Lombardi responded,

Losing control, well those are frustrating times. Because you have to get yourself turned off to how those exchanges made you feel—fight or flight mode. I *know* it alters how I acted. I know it does. And until it gets resolved I'm still not calm. I have to be able to get myself in a different place…but I used to have—nobody could tell I was having them but I could tell—like mini panic attacks where I could feel my blood pressure rising, I could feel that pain behind my neck that felt like steam sort of, and it was *burning*, and it was *anger,* and you could tell it was this *fury*.

In this example, Ms. Lombardi explicitly named moments in which she felt upset and irrational when "losing control." As she described, at such times she experienced strong, visceral feelings of panic and anger. She also intimated here that such losses in control negatively affected her interactions with children in terms of how she spoke to or otherwise engaged with them, and also affected her decision-making. According to Ms. Lombardi, for example, without control she was in "a different place," and thus might do or say things very differently—and less rationally—than she normally might.

As Ms. Lombardi described, one reason she found these losses in control to be problematic related to their potentially detrimental effects on children. For example, in response to the question "What happens when you lose control like this?" she said,

Well, I try really hard not to take out what I'm feeling on the inside. Because they [students] pick up on that! If I act a certain way they're going to react to that. And when I yell I wasn't getting the reaction I needed. So, speaking calmly gets me there so much better. If can stay calm and still correct behavior and still move on to teach it's a thing that happens much more quickly. It works better for everybody….Mindfulness has helped. Being able to meditate, take a couple minutes to deeply breath has definitely helped.…And I'm keeping in mind certain kids, who if they hear me yell they might automatically be acting physically to my voice changing. So, I've got to stay calm for kids like that but I've got to stay calm for everybody, especially if I want to get to the teaching points I have.

Here, Ms. Lombardi highlighted ways in which children might respond negatively to small expressive changes in her performance, such as when she raises her voice. As she put it, maintaining expressive calm and other forms of control just "works better for everybody."

Ms. Lombardi was not the only teacher in this study to allude to her struggles with staying in control and to the detrimental effects losses in control might have on relationships with children. For example, Ms. Eichner stressed the importance of staying calm when she felt herself beginning to get frustrated with students. Of this she said,

> In my second hour class, I always have to take a deep breath before I walk in and ask myself, "How are you going to make this successful today? Or are we going head-to-head-today?" And that head-to-head never works…and that can be hard, that can be really hard to do that when I'm angry or upset, but I have to if we're going to be productive and actually do anything.

Similar to Ms. Lombardi, Ms. Eichner implied that losses in expressive control (such as becoming angry or upset) can make it more difficult for her to connect with or teach children. As she pointed out here, they can lead to what she called "going head-to-head" with children. Rather, Ms. Eichner stressed here how important it was in such moments to project an expressive façade that was calm and even, and that did not reveal any feelings of anger or distress. Doing so, her comment implied, allowed her to get on with the business of teaching.

Ms. Martin also spoke of the negative correlation between losing control and connecting with or instructing children. When asked if there were ever times she felt herself getting angry or upset, she said,

> Especially a class I taught last year, they made me absolutely furious almost every day. And then they would blow me away with how amazing they were. It was like a roller coaster. It's good I had a prep an hour after that and before because I would be almost in tears sometimes anticipating how awful they might be—to each other, not to me, to each other…. I couldn't even take it. And then of course I'm all shaken and it's harder to teach…. It's really not worth the anger.

Ms. Martin's comment again underscored the importance, in her mind, of maintaining expressive control over herself. As she put it, when she was angry or upset "it's harder to teach."

In another example, Ms. Voss similarly expressed the need to maintain self-control. When asked "Do you ever lose control," she responded "Of course!" She elaborated this way:

> And I have to keep reminding myself – and I often will look up at the front board at the norms—and remind myself to assume good intentions. Because so many times kids will do things and if I jumped on it right away it wouldn't be for the right reasons. Because

they may be doing things and have a really "good" (in their mind) reason… And I can
make kids really miserable or I can make this a really happy place. So, by stepping back
and taking a minute to remind me why I'm doing it … But just taking that minute. And
sometimes I forget, because everybody does, we're only human. But I really try hard to
think before I say or do anything crazy.

As Ms. Voss pointed out, teachers are "only human." Yet, sometimes she felt their very real
"human" emotions can lead them to behave or speak irrationally, counterproductively, or even
harmfully, such as in ways that might "make kids really miserable." Her comment implied,
therefore, her feeling that it was critical to keep expressive control over herself and her emotions,
so as to also ensure that she could maintain productive and connected relationships with children.

In general, it seemed that for these participating teachers, the idea of losing control was
frightening and off-putting. Not only did it imply a failure to manage *themselves*, but it also
foreshadowed a larger problem: a failure to manage or exert influence over *children* and
classroom interactions more broadly. This, in turn, meant that teachers' ability to instruct and
connect with children was placed in jeopardy. Therefore, these teachers all wanted to minimize
anger, stress, frustration, and other negative feelings they believed made them behave irrationally
or in ways that otherwise put their ability to control themselves—and thus to control classroom
interactions—at risk.

Patterns in Teachers' Losses of Control

When recounting moments when teachers felt themselves getting angry or frustrated, felt
embarrassed, or otherwise experienced strong emotions that they said affected their expressive
control (and thus their control over classroom interaction), nearly every teacher described
interactional exchanges that featured children of color, and which pertained especially to Black
males. However, as I describe below, the teachers rarely specified children's race or gender in
these descriptions, and rarely appeared to consider the relationship between their *persona work*
and their own and children's identities more broadly, despite these glaring patterns in their losses
of control. Examples of this are described below and in the following section.

For Ms. Martin, feelings of helplessness and a loss of control occurred primarily in her
exchanges with one Black boy, Sean. She described their relationship this way:

He has a negative relationship with everyone in the class right now, including me, but
mostly me. He's feeling like he's on this behavior plan, and that his getting benched in

wrestling is because of me. When really, it's because of him and his lack of doing anything…. He said to me last week—I was like, "Sean, I sense that you're upset with me." He was like, "I didn't say that." I was like, "I didn't say you said it. That's my perception" He's like, "Whatever." I was like, "I don't want you to sabotage yourself because of me. I want you to do well. I would be upset if you didn't." ... But he just sits in that chair right there. He won't participate.... So, I just am not going to push him. I'm not going to push his buttons. Because it doesn't do anything or makes it worse. And I just don't understand. It makes me so tired and frustrated and on edge."

As she spoke, Ms. Martin's frustration was palpable. She did not understand Sean's negative feelings toward her or for the class more broadly, and she seemed to take his behaviors personally. As she indicated in her comment, she often chose to respond by not engaging with Sean at all. Not only did she feel "it doesn't do anything or makes it worse," but she expressed that interacting with him put her, as she termed it, "on edge." An implication here is that her interactions with Sean were personally depleting, leaving her with less energy and attention to devote to the rest of the group. As a result, she simply chose not to engage with him at all, and thus failed to orchestrate classroom interactions in ways that might benefit him.

Ms. Reid had two children in her observed class that she said made her especially angry and frustrated—a Black girl named Farrar and a Black boy named Isaac. She described her relationship with Farrar like this:

We butted heads so much, and she had the biggest attitude. And then her mom had called me and asked if I thought she would be good for AP government and we talked and I said she is super smart and understands things that other kids don't, but I said that she focuses more on social issues and her work ethic would have to change. So, Farrar was like, "My mom told me you really care about my education and you think I'm really smart and that I just need to change a few things and I never knew that." And I was like, "Whoa, okay, I didn't know." …I mean, she just *hated* me. But once she realized I was on her side she totally changed…And now she wants to answer *everything* and I know that if no one else knows the answer she'll *always* know the answer…. She wants to be called on *every* time. And she probably understands it but I don't think, like – you know everybody needs a chance. In a class of 33 students and you only have ten students, you can't call on every

single person every day. Anyway, so it's still stressful but I try not to show it. I am trying to stay calm and not set anything off again so I try to call on her.

As Ms. Reid indicated here, by the time of the study her relationship with Farrar was generally positive. Yet, for a long time she had felt Farrar just "hated" her. Ms. Reid also alluded to being unaware of how she herself may have exacerbated the conflict with Farrar in their earlier interactions. As Ms. Reid indicated here, she never knew, for example, that Farrar believed Ms. Reid did not feel her to be smart or capable. Even at the time of the study, Ms. Reid still admitted to feeling nervous she might do or say something to recreate drama and frustration in her interactions with Farrar. As she put it here, "It's still stressful…I am trying to stay calm and not set anything off again."

In addition to her fraught relationship with Farrar, Ms. Reid also often talked about her negative interactions with another child, Isaac—which, in contrast, remained unresolved. For example, when asked whether there were any other children with whom she found herself struggling, she responded,

> That kid that was sitting right there, Isaac. It's been the whole year trying to show me he doesn't like me. He says, "I don't like White teachers, I don't like White female teachers, I don't care what they have to say, they're all the same." And I know he comes to school with that perspective already. So, I thought, you know what? I'm going to try to show him the best I can that I'm here for his education and that I'm here for his benefit and he can take it or not but I'm going to show him the best I can...and so I try, but it *still* doesn't work…. And now I just laugh about it.... But at first, I would get caught up in it, but I can't let it get to me because that's what he wants and it makes it worse.

As with her relationship with Farrar, Ms. Reid talked about growing increasingly frustrated in her interactions with Isaac. As she put it, "I would get caught up in it." Her comments implied how important it was for her to maintain control and minimize her anger and frustration with him, as it just "makes it worse."

Ms. Williams also talked about interactions where she felt herself losing expressive control. Rather than referencing consistently challenging interactions with the same one or two individuals, however, her descriptions of losing control related to consistently negative interactions with the same *group* of children. Specifically, she described such losses in control occurring with a group of Black boys in her first-hour class. For example,

In my first-hour group there are like eight totally immature boys and I lost my head and mind yesterday. The announcement came on and I said guys, you really need to be quiet because I need to hear the announcement. And the guys were stampeding at the door because they wanted to go someplace. One would push the other and they would fall down on the ground and act like, "I'm dead!" And I'm like, "Guys you really need to be quiet to I can hear the announcement!" And by like the third time—and I don't scream that often—I'm like, "Gentleman! I need you— [trails off]."

Ms. Williams admitted that her own attitude towards the boys might have been making her relationship with them worse. In response to the question, "What do you think is happening there? Why do they make you so angry?" she said,

I don't know if it started with one thing—if it started with them and I just reacted to it and suddenly it was this pattern of reacting constantly. Or if it started with *me*, and there was just something I had done—no idea what it was.… Is it something I'm doing that is creating that? Or is it vice versa? It doesn't matter. Because I can control it.… I'm not surprised if they don't like me but I know I am at least fifty percent responsible. I need to somehow change their attitude, change something.

As with the teachers described above, Ms. Williams' comments echoed her frustration that the children in question did not appear to "like" her, and that they appeared unresponsive to her overtures. Her comments also implied her feelings of helplessness to change the situation. Yet, she also recognized that these negative "patterns" in her interactions with the boys were likely provoked, at least partially, by her own frustration and interactional approach when engaging with them. For example, as she speculated above, "Is there something I'm doing that is creating that?"

Ms. Eichner also exclusively cited exchanges involving students of color when describing interactions with children where she felt angry, frustrated, or otherwise out of control of herself expressively. For instance, when responding to the question, "Are there specific times you remember losing control?" she said,

Well, I yelled at two boys in my second hour. I yelled. I had these two kids just—like, the class is sitting and ready and they just insisted on not stopping their talk. I was like, through the roof. And I finally lost it. I did. I *yelled*.… And in my yelling, I tried to think—but I just couldn't. "Everyone sitting in this class today is tired of waiting!" I did

try though not to let this turn into, "This whole class is horrible." … On this day, I just said [to the boys], "If you have any intention on taking a single extra moment away from the rest of your classmates you should leave *now* because if not now I'm writing it up and I'm calling home and I'm not going to be done with it."

Ms. Eichner's loss of expressive control is evident, in this example, by her description of how she yelled and otherwise "lost it." In that moment, she found herself literally unable to think. She also worried here that her anger with the two boys in question would affect her relationship with the rest of the class. As she put it, she tried not to let her anger turn into, "This whole class is horrible."

Unlike the other teachers described thus far in this section, however, Ms. Eichner typically did not name interactions with the *same* children as triggers for her losses in control. On other occasions, for example, such as when asked about "a time you remember getting upset," she would cite different children as inciting her anger or frustration. Still, while they involved different children, what each of her stories had in common was that the children featured in them were all Black, and all the students she described also seemed unwilling (in her mind) to comply immediately with her directives, as was the case in her story above.

Ms. Lombardi too mentioned moments when exchanges with different children affected her control. Like Ms. Eichner, her stories rarely named same child more than once. Yet, also like Ms. Eichner's storytelling, the fraught exchanges Ms. Lombardi described always occurred with children of color, and primarily with Black boys. Ms. Lombardi recalled, for example, how once when she patrolled the hallway she "got into it" with a boy, who happened to be Black, because he went "ballistic" and argued with her publicly:

Monday morning, right after daylight savings, I came in. We have a great relationship me and this one kid but he's mad right now, he doesn't like some of the kids in the class. So, he saw me that morning in there and said, "Why did you nominate *her"* – and he named a kid – "for student of the week. I'm so mad at you about this!" And he doesn't base it off any evidence. Just, he's angry and, "Why did you do it?" So, automatically I'm starting my morning on the defense with him and it's going to carry over into first hour unless I figure out a way to resolve it with him. And it just kept escalating. He went ballistic. I couldn't tell him. I couldn't tell him why. It's a professional decision and it's none of his business. And I'm trying to be able to say that to him because he crosses boundaries all of

the time and he wants to know something that's really none of his business. And I said, "Well, you know what, we're going have to agree to disagree because sometimes I see things that you don't see. It's different." He didn't like that. He got madder! He got madder. I'm thinking, oh man, I tried so hard to say it in a kind way. But he was already mad so he came in huffing and puffing into first hour…and I said, "You gotta stop." I looked right at him. "You gotta stop." …Well, he stormed out, he's in the hallway. And I'm feeling like now I have to teach this class and deal with him and it's just too much.

In this example, Ms. Lombardi alluded to how the anger and frustration she felt in her exchange with this student distracted her from her other responsibilities. For example, she appeared concerned, in this story, not only about her interaction with the boy himself, but about how the negative feelings generated by it might also detrimentally affect her control in interactions with *other* children. "It's just too much," she said. She appeared to take her negative interaction with him personally—but in the process also seemed to depersonalize the boy himself. Although she began her story by indicating that she and the boy often got along well, by the end she referred to him much more objectively. As she put it, "[I have to] deal with him."

In another example, Ms. Lombardi recounted how several years prior, when Apple Creek's student body became more racially diverse, she became unsure and self-conscious about what most of the children in her class thought of her. This, she said, made her feel less confident and stressed. She described it this way, in response to the question "How important do you think your identity or the identities of your students are? How much do they matter?"

Especially with this larger influx of kids from the other district in the last five years I now had this huge class where I see that slang was a problem. I'm going to call it slang. There's probably a better term for it. There was an underlying tone of, "I'm going to talk this way in this call because most of the other kids can understand me but our White honky teacher can't." And I felt like that that year. I don't feel like that as much anymore. But then I also always thought I was saying something stupid and sometimes I would get so mad or just be upset all the time and probably it wasn't good for my teaching or for those kids.

This story provides one of the few examples a participating teacher alluded directly to her identity as a White woman when describing her fraught exchanges with children. Here, Ms. Lombardi seemed to attribute her loss of control—such as her feelings of being "upset all the

time"—to the differences in how she and her students talked, and to her feelings of alienation and inadequacy. As a result, she said she acted in ways that were not always "good" for her instruction or relationships. Yet, despite implicitly flagging her own race as a potential factor in her negative feelings, she was not explicit about its role in her fraught interaction with children; likewise, she did not name children's own racial identities as potentially important in these contexts.

Of all participating teachers, Ms. Voss was the only one who did not exclusively describe interactions with children of color when talking about "losing control." When she spoke of fraught or problematic interactions, it tended to be related to the entire group. In response to the question "Do you ever feel you are losing control over yourself and your performance?" she responded this way:

Heck yes. My other group, almost every day. That group is crazy. They are mean kids. Mean spirited. Mean kids….Sometimes I feel like such an actress. There are days I don't want to be here, I don't want to be doing what I'm doing, I'm just done in with whatever. And I have to *act* a certain way. And I think it's just me acting like a teacher, me acting the way I normally would. And I think that you can do that. Sometimes it's just a matter of, just a matter of pretending you like them. Because some days I don't. And when I come in – especially to this one class … they are *so* difficult. It's just a tough group of kids. I don't want to treat them any different, I don't want to do things differently. And I have to tell myself, this is what you're going to act like, this is when you're going to smile, smile now! Because otherwise it can just make me crazy, and make things worse.

While Ms. Voss did not consistently describe fraught interactions with individuals or small groups, her negative descriptions of interactions with the whole class were also significant, and also followed the pattern evident above. Specifically, an important note is that Ms. Voss' classes—and especially the class she alluded to here—were less racially and culturally diverse than those of the other teachers (excepting Ms. Lombardi's), and they also housed many more children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In other words, when describing negative interactions pertaining to the whole class, Ms. Voss was essentially describing fraught interactions with, primarily, children of color.

In fact, more than the other teachers, her talk about the children she taught—and about the students at the school more broadly—skewed more negative in general. When asked to

describe her students, for example, Ms. Voss once said, "We have Teflon students who just resist. Everything. And because they just know they're going to get splattered with *everything*. And you know what, it's like ha ha, gotcha." Again, an important note here is that most of the children Ms. Voss described were Black. At another point, when similarly speaking of children—most of whom were children of color—enrolled at West Learning more broadly, Ms. Voss said, "These kids, especially in districts like this, they come so broken. And with what they come to school with, it's like amazing they can even function and learn anything, some of these kids." In fact, although Ms. Voss often praised many children specifically in the group under observation for this study, she seemed to treat them as an exception to her more typical deficit framing.

Deracialization of *Persona Work* and Control

In general, across all these examples, one implicit reason for teachers' losses in expressive control seemed to be the teachers' perception that children were, somehow, resisting them. In other words, teachers appeared to feel themselves losing their own expressive control when they felt their control over children was disrupted or slipping. For example, Ms. Eichner and Ms. Martin's comments above described their frustration when children did not immediately comply with their demands or conform to the interactional norms they had set for the class. Similarly, Ms. Williams expressed her frustration above that the group of boys she described continually failed to do as she asked—and, sometimes, appeared to do the opposite.

Another factor evident across teachers' descriptions of losing expressive control was the sense, among many teachers, that the children in question did not like them. For example, the phrases "s/he hated me" or "s/he didn't like me" permeated nearly all of the teachers' stories of fraught interactions with children, and many of the teachers appeared to take students' dislike personally. In particular, teachers' comments implied the difficult time many had detaching emotionally from their negative interactions with children. Rather, they often seemed caught up in back-and-forth exchanges with children and described themselves as struggling to embrace what Ms. Lombardi termed, in the previous section, "mindfulness."

Most notably, however, an implicit pattern across all these teachers' stories of losing control related to the fact that all the children they described were children of color, and most were Black boys. Yet, when teachers explained their losses in control over their *persona work* with children, they typically did not mention children's race (or their own). In fact, they rarely

commented on differences in their own and children's identities and experiences at all as a potentially contributing factor to their losses in control.

For example, in her many stories related to the group of boys in her first period class with whom she had difficulty, Ms. Williams did not mention the boys were Black. Likewise, despite her continual struggles in relating to and engaging Sean, Ms. Martin did not remark on his (or her own) race or gender as potentially contributing to their interactional dynamic. Ms. Reid similarly did not point out any significance in the fact that she was White and Farrar and Isaac were Black—despite Isaac's explicit statement that he did not like White female teachers. Ms. Eichner and Ms. Lombardi too never noted that the students with whom they typically seemed to struggle the most were always children of color. Last, Ms. Voss, during her generally negative talk about many of the children at West Learning Academy, never explicitly mentioned children's race.

Rather, it was as if the teachers did not view their expressive behaviors or their broader interactions with children as having anything to do with children's identities or experiences or, in most cases, with the teachers' own race, culture, or experience. Instead, their descriptions of losing expressive control were typically deracialized. The teachers did not commonly acknowledge ways their own or their students' race, gender, or culture might impact how they used expressive behaviors or how children interpreted them (both positively and negatively). Even in the face of the clear patterns characterizing their losses of expressive control, the teachers did not *remark* on these patterns, such as by acknowledging ways their *persona work* might not function equally well for everyone, depending on children's racial identities.

Naming generic "differences" between teachers and children as important. The teachers rarely acknowledged variations in their expressive control depending on the children with whom they interacted, nor did they appear to consider the differential effects their *persona work* might have on different children. However, they did sometimes refer to broader "differences" between themselves and their students. In their general conversations about teaching, for instance, many indicated it was important to acknowledge and celebrate such "differences." In one such example, when asked, "Are there ways you think about your own or your students' race or gender as you teach?" Ms. Williams said,

> We're *not* all the same, we're really not. There are *so* many differences and if you don't address those, then the kids know that you're just closing your eyes and saying, "Well,

everybody is all the same to me." We shouldn't be. And the person I was ten years ago *did* say, "Well, we're all the same, we're all just people." But your background does color so much of how you react to what is said to you, to what happens to you, to the way you perceive what you're reading.

Ms. Williams said that she often tried to take these "differences" into account when engaging with children, such as by not assuming things about her students' home lives and doing her best to normalize each child's experience. "I want to make it so each kid comes in here and feels normal, no matter where they come from," she said.

Because she identified as gay, she said she especially empathized with those of her students whose experiences were different from what might be considered the norm, or who might be marginalized in some way. In particular, she noted, "I have experienced discrimination and so I understand what it feels like. I don't want my students going through that here." Ms. Williams also provided several examples of how what she felt was her awareness of "discrimination" translated to her teaching practice and relationships with children. For example, in response to the follow-up question, "What are some ways you try to do that, to be sensitive to children's experiences?" she said,

> One thing is I'm very, very conscious when we tell stories about different kinds of families. There are kids in here whose dads are in prison, I've got kids in here who live with grandma because their parents aren't around—so I'll say, "There are different families in here…" – and I'll throw out lots of different types so that you know that whatever family you have is okay.

In addition to trying to ensure the discourse in the classroom around families was inclusive, Ms. Williams also said she tried to monitor her own language when engaging children in topics where she felt considerations about race played a role. For example, in response to the question "Are there other things you try to be aware of related to your own or children's identities?" she said,

> So, in history we've done slavery and everything else – and I'm very careful because I caught myself saying, "The way we've treated slaves" – because I'm White. And would I have said, "The way we've treated slaves" if I was Black? No! It's the way I've always perceived history, this little feeling of guilt, that the people I came from *did* this to

people. So that kind of thing—I try to be careful with my language sometimes. But anyway, I'm *not* those people.

However, despite her espoused sensitivity to "difference" (e.g., in relation to race or experience) between herself and her students or among students, Ms. Williams nevertheless did not specifically interrogate differences in her expressive behaviors and interactional patterns with children. Although she indicated above that she was sometimes careful of how she was positioning herself due to what she called "this little feeling of guilt" as a White woman, for example, she did not identify any specific ways her role as a White woman might impact her interactions with (Black) children. If anything, in fact, Ms. Williams *deflected* culpability, such as by saying above, "I'm not those people," or by identifying herself as a "minority that can relate to other minorities," as she does in the quotation below. When asked, "Any other ways you think your own or your students' identities might impact your instruction or relationships with kids?" she responded,

> When talking about the constitution, I talked about equal rights, it's really important for me to get across to them this wasn't just a Black and White thing. People weren't still able to marry back then… but still today can't marry and it's the same civil rights issue. It's funny because I'm a White woman and people don't see me as a minority. But I *am* a minority that can relate to other minorities.

In general, although Ms. Williams' simultaneous acknowledgement of "difference" and her deflection of what this might mean in terms of her relationships with children has broad ramifications for many aspects of her teaching practice, it also specifically ties to her *persona work*. As argued above, her stance implied her view that her expressive behaviors were unbiased and deracialized, or were somehow expressively "neutral." Because she did not acknowledge the potential relationship between her own identity, her *persona work*, and her losses in expressive control, it made it harder for her to see the potentially differential impact her expressive behaviors had on children depending on their own identities and experiences. Given the uneven patterns this study has already shown (and which it will revisit in Chapter 6) in Ms. Williams' *persona work* with different children, her teaching—and her expressive behaviors in particular— were clearly not as neutral as she imagined.

Ms. Reid also commented generally about the importance of learning about and celebrating "differences" between herself and her students. When asked to describe whether she thought things like race or gender were important in her teaching she said,

> The world's made up of so many different people. My parents did us a favor by not judging so much. And I realize a lot of people do judge. And they're not hateful people. They stereotype. Maybe they don't judge but they stereotype. And I probably do too but I don't mean to…so I try to learn about my students, and our differences, our different experiences and about who we are.

Although she did not explicitly mention what she meant by "differences" in her comment, Ms. Reid—similar to Ms. Williams—implied here her belief that such differences were important for her teaching. In fact, Ms. Reid could offer some specific examples of ways she and (some) children engaged with one another as a result of these "differences." For example, in response to the question, "Can you think of something that is important to know about ways you and your students might differ?" she said,

> The differences in how we say things, how some of us say things. I learned to just ask them about it. I would say, "What does that mean?" They might say, "Ghetto talk," or "This is just what we say," and I would say, "Well, tell me what it means, I don't know what it means, I want to know everything." Because I probably say things wrong all the time and don't mean to. I have no idea.

In her comment, Ms. Reid alluded to adopting a relational stance defined by curiosity and interest. Here, it appeared that she was willing to admit what she did *not* know and—more than Ms. Williams—was able to acknowledge that she had orientations and experiences distinct from at least some of her students which might lead her to say or do things incorrectly or inequitably. As Ms. Reid put it, "I have no idea."

However, Ms. Reid did not explicitly cite these differences between herself and students as potentially important when describing specific fraught interactions with children. As described above, she shied away from naming anything about her own or the students' race when describing her problematic interactions with Farrar and Isaac. Although Ms. Reid was able to theoretically recognize the importance of "differences" in her relational work, she seemed reluctant to consider specific examples of how it might *negatively* impact her practice or expressive behaviors.

In general, some research has shown that Ms. Williams and Ms. Reid's orientations are not unusual here. Research accounts have argued that while many White teachers typically talk about children of color as *generically* different from themselves, they rarely consider the nuances of how those differences play out in teachers' instructional and relational practice (Johnson, 2002; Yoon, 2012). In keeping with these findings, Ms. Reid, Ms. Williams, and the other participating teachers typically did not mention their own or their students' identities as significant factors for shaping classroom interaction, even when all the negative exchanges characterized by expressive losses in control (e.g., anger, frustration, irrationality) occurred among children of color. Although, as described above, some teachers broadly referenced the importance of understanding racial or cultural "differences" in the classroom, the teachers typically ignored these "differences" or said they preferred to look past them when talking about their individual relationships with children. This was especially true in terms of how many teachers talked about their expressive behaviors.

Treating everyone "equally." Even in cases they generally spoke of the importance of celebrating "difference," many participating teachers simultaneously emphasized their desire to treat children equally, regardless of students' race, culture, gender, or other dimensions of identity. Ms. Martin, for instance, commonly spoke about her efforts to ensure aspects of her expressive behaviors were the same no matter the children with whom she interacted. In one example, when asked, "Are there ways you think about interacting with children differently, depending on who they are?" she said,

> I actually try to treat children equally. I try to make my tone not change. I don't want it to seem like my tone is friendly with some kids and not with others. And just, like, even body language…. Like, I wouldn't want to be friendly with this group up here, and then with this group be like, "What are you doing [sternly]?" or have my back to them. I try not to be like that. If I'm going to address everyone, I'm going to try and be jokey and light …. I also think you have to be mindful of some things that you say and the way you say them. For example, let's say kids are asking me to go to the bathroom and it's really annoying me. So, I snap and say, "No one else can go!" But what if the kid that I said that to feels, like, marginalized already in some way. And I'm not meaning it in any way other than I can't take it anymore, but I've said it to "that" kid. So, you need to treat them equally, or I try to do that.

In her comment, Ms. Martin indicated not wanting to exhibit any clear preference in her expressive interaction with some children over others, such as through her tone, body language, humor, and other aspects of the *self*. As was implied by her comment, she worried that any such shift in her outward manner or tone when interacting with different children would be noticeable and might feel unfair to children, detrimentally affecting their experience. Even unintentional changes in her communication style and treatment of children, she believed, could critically impact a child's sense of security and engagement, especially in cases where children might already feel "marginalized." Rather, she indicated trying—especially through her voice and body language—to engage with children in ways that were expressively "equal."

Ms. Eichner also spoke of ways she tried to use expressive behaviors in ways that were equal—although, in contrast, she used the phrase "the same" to describe her efforts. For example, in response to the same question asked of Ms. Martin, above, she said,

> I wouldn't say I try to treat kids differently. There are particular kids I know might need a little more, but mostly it's important to try to treat kids the same, like maybe try to make it to every kid at least once during class or call on as many as I can or talk to them in the same way.

In her comment, Ms. Eichner alluded to the idea that specific children might need "more." Yet, she also indicated here that her general preference was to try to interact with children in ways that were comparable or "the same." For instance, "mostly it's important to try to treat kids the same," she said. Like Ms. Martin, Ms. Eichner also alluded specifically here to aspects of her expressive behaviors as a way of doing so, such as by monitoring how she "talked" to children and ensuring it was similar.

These were not the only teachers to express their preference to treat children "equally." For example, Ms. Voss also referenced the idea, saying, "They all come from different places, so it's important in here that these kids be on an equal playing field, that I treat them equally." Similarly, Ms. Williams said, "I try to be fair, and I try to treat them equally. I call on them equally and try stand near all of them, that kind of thing." In general, "equal treatment" seemed to mean several things for teachers' expressive behaviors. The teachers' comments implied the importance talking to, smiling at, joking with or otherwise engaging with everyone; of standing near everyone or otherwise granting them similar nonverbal acknowledgement; and of calling on children in ways they would interpret as fair. In fact, as will be described in the next chapter,

many children also wanted their teachers to treat them "fairly," and looked for evidence of this from similar categories of expressive behaviors.

Yet there is also an implicit problem in teachers' expressed desire to treat children "equally." As referenced in this and the previous chapter, there were cases where teachers' *persona work* or their patterns of losing expressive control were *not,* in fact, equitable or fair depending on the race or gender of the children with whom they engaged. Thus, it was clear that teachers may not have been aware of engaging in expressive behaviors in ways that were *not* in fact fair or equitable for all children. Similarly, while in general teachers embraced the idea of "equality" in their interactional work, they may not have been aware of what this actually ought to look like in terms of their expressive practice. An additional challenge might also be that, in cases where children had *different* ideas about teachers' expressive behaviors due to their own identities or experiences, teachers' "equal treatment" might have created, rather than mitigated, relational challenges.

In general, when referring to their *persona work*, participating teachers typically talked about behaving expressively in *one* way with *all* children. Their descriptions of their *persona work* seemed to convey the unspoken belief that the same expressive display functioned similarly for every child and aspect of classroom interaction, regardless of children's own identities, experiences, and preferences and regardless of teachers' own habits or biases. This assumption of expressive neutrality is concerning, especially in cases where teachers' *persona work* was not, in fact, neutral. Due to their assumption that their expressive behaviors functioned equally well for everyone, these teachers might have been less willing or able to recognize and track on inequitable patterns in their *persona work* when engaging with different children, let alone equipped to discuss how such inequitable expressive patterns might likewise create uneven opportunities in the classroom for some children more broadly.

Summarizing Limitations of Expressive Control in Orchestrating Interaction

What this study calls *persona work* has not historically been named or bounded as a domain of practice in the research on teaching, and has not typically been taught in teacher education programs. As this chapter described, participating teachers instead reached their understandings about *persona work* and its significance on their own, and their conceptions about *persona work* were thus highly variable and incomplete. Nevertheless, there were also

several overarching commonalities in how teachers appeared to think about and use *persona work*. Specifically, analysis from this chapter showed that teachers talked about their *persona work* primarily in relation to the idea exerting "control" when orchestrating classroom interaction. For example, teachers continually referred to using expressive behaviors to control the central conditions of classroom interaction related to the following factors: the environment and children's physical positioning throughout the room; children's attention and interest; the intellectual space of the classroom; and their own emotions and reactions. Teachers also feared *losing* expressive control, as doing so made it harder for them to control interactions with children in the ways they wanted.

Findings also indicated that teachers were largely unaware of inequitable patterns in both their control over children and in their losses of expressive control. Further, while they talked about the importance of sometimes controlling their instinctive reactions and emotions when interacting with children, they never mentioned the need to control racial biases, deficit perspectives, or privilege that stemmed from their identities as White women and thus which might impact their *persona work*. It may be, therefore, that any inequitable patterns in teachers' expressive behaviors were further exacerbated by teachers' inability (or reluctance) to describe the ways their identities and orientations may have contributed to these expressive inequities.

In general, while teachers' use of *persona work* sometimes appeared to function in ways that could be productive for at least some children, the control they exerted through their *persona work* potentially limited or restricted other children's intellectual and relational opportunities. The same children and groups of children often appeared disadvantaged by teachers' expressive behaviors, and thus appeared to also more consistently resist teachers' *persona work*. This implies that the primary expressive channel through which teachers orchestrated classroom interaction—i.e., that of control—was not always productive for all children. Instead, especially in moments characterized by fraught interactions between teachers and children, it may be that teachers needed to do something expressively different in their *persona work*. Were teachers to have tempered their control of classroom interaction with other kinds of expressive displays, for example, children might have responded differently and more positively to teachers' overtures. This idea is revisited in Chapter 6, which explores children's perceptions of (and requirements for) teacher's *persona work*.

Chapter 6

CHILDREN'S IDEAS ABOUT THEIR TEACHERS' *PERSONA WORK*

Teaching is about, for, and in response to children. Children's perceptions of teachers' expressive moves and reactions can provide a critical framework for studying what this study calls teachers' *persona work*. What children notice about teachers' expressive behaviors in the classroom, how they interpret them, and the importance they attribute to them can shed light on how *persona work* functions, what it involves, and, most importantly, why it matters. This chapter therefore turns to the children themselves and considers how they talked about and understood teachers' *persona work*.

The chapter considers the extent to which children in this study were influenced by teachers' *persona work* (and how), and investigates how children's responses to teachers' *persona work* varied depending on the classroom or on children's own identities. It also summarizes the descriptions children gave of aspects of teachers' *persona work* that positively influenced them, as well as their descriptions of teachers' expressive behaviors that children said interfered with their learning or engagement. Ultimately, findings from this chapter show how, according to the children, teachers' *persona work* did—and did not—orchestrate classroom interaction in ways that felt equitable or conducive to their learning and engagement.

Specifically, the chapter unearths tensions between how children and teachers appeared to conceive differently of the purposes for *persona work*. The preceding chapter showed that teachers primarily talked about using their expressive behaviors as tools to "control" classroom interaction in specific ways. For example, it showed how teachers said they used *persona work* to direct children's attention and focus, communicate to children what was appropriate, or manage and shape the airspace as children shared ideas. In contrast, while children too expressed a desire for teachers to exert some control through their expressive behaviors, they also desired teachers to engage in other channels of *persona work*. In particular, children desired teachers to continually convey through their expressive behaviors their notice and intellectual regard for

children, as well as engage with them expressively in ways that were equitable and implied a sense of connectedness between teachers and children.

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Reviewing Sources of Student Data

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Before summarizing the major claims of this chapter, I first review the data sources on which it drew for analysis. Children's beliefs about teachers' *persona work* described here emerge from the ideas and opinions of 220 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. Approximately two-thirds of the children were students of color, and about half identified as Black. The remaining children in each classroom were White. In each classroom, children were also from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. For an overview of the student demographics in each classroom, see Table 6.1.

Table 6.1
Student Demographics (n=220), by Classroom

Classroom	Students (n)	Grade	Subject	Race/Ethnicity			Gender	
				Children of Color %		White %	Female %	Male %
				Total	Black			
Ms. Williams (Section 1)	32	6	Social Studies	75% (n=24)	63% (n=20)	25% (n=8)	62% (n=19)	38% (n=13)
Ms. Williams (Section 2)	30	6	Social Studies	67% (n=20)	50% (n=15)	33% (n=10)	60% (n=18)	40% (n=12)
Ms. Voss	28	6	ELA & Social Studies	64% (n=18)	50% (n=14)	36% (n=10)	36% (n=10)	64% (n=18)
Ms. Martin (Section 1)	27	7	ELA	57% (n=16)	39% (n=11)	43% (n=12)	57% (n=16)	43% (n=12
Ms. Martin (Section 2)	33	7	ELA	58% (n=19)	48% (n=16)	42% (n=14)	48% (n=16)	52% (n=17)
Ms. Lombardi	15	7	ELA	80% (n=12)	67% (n=10)	20% (n=3)	53% (n=8)	47% (n=7)
Ms. Eichner	25	8	ELA	57% (n=18)	33% (n=12)	43% (n=7)	43% (n=12)	57% (n=13)
Ms. Reid	30	8	ELA & Social Studies	57% (n=17)	33% (n=10)	43% (n=13)	43% (n=13	57% (n=17)

Findings from this chapter derived primarily from two data sources. First, at the end of every class period, I administered surveys to children that asked questions about their experiences in the classrooms and about the teachers featured in this study and more broadly. In

total, I analyzed a total of 36 surveys (approximately five per class), with an average student response rate of 78%. The respondents of each survey were typically both boys and girls, and were racially diverse.

To supplement data generated through these end-of-class surveys, I also conducted one to three focus groups with children for each classroom. In total, I conducted 13 focus groups, with 70 children total participating. Table 6.2 provides the demographic breakdown of each focus group by children's race and gender. As the table indicates, focus group participants were diverse.

Table 6.2
Demographics of Focus Group Participants (n=70), by Classroom

Class	Teacher	Grade	Total in group (n)	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian	
				Girl	*Boy*	*Girl*	*Boy*	*Girl*	*Boy*	*Girl*	*Boy*
1	Williams #1	6	6	1	-	3	1	-	-	-	1
2	Williams #2	6	4	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	1
3	Voss	6	8	2	-	1	5	-	-	-	-
			6	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	2
4	Martin #1	7	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
			4	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
5	Martin #2	7	6	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
			3	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
			5	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
6	Lombardi	7	6	-	-	3	1	-	1	1	-
7	Eichner	8	8	1	-	6	1	-	-	-	-
8	Reid	8	6	-	1	1	-	1	1	1	1
			5	1	3	-	-	-	-	1	-
Total children participating in focus groups:				21% (n=15)	9% (n=6)	30% (n=21)	19% (n=13)	1% (n=1)	3% (n=2)	6% (n=4)	11% (n=8)
				Total White: 30% of all participants		**Total Black:** 49% participants		**Total Hispanic:** 4% participants		**Total Asian:** 18% participants	
						Total Children of Color: 70% of all focus group participants					

As this table shows, participants entailed approximately 30% White children and 49% Black children, and with a total of 70% of participants more broadly identifying as children of color. There were only slightly more girls than boys participating.

Overview of Chapter and its Claims

This chapter divided into three sections. For an overarching conceptual map of this chapter, see Figure 6.1.
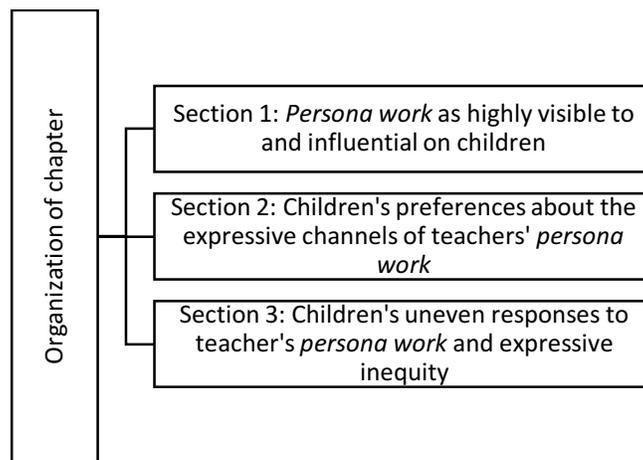
Figure 6.1. *Conceptual map, Chapter 6 ("Children's Ideas about their Teachers'* Persona Work*")*.

First, I show how children continually referenced aspects of teachers' verbal and nonverbal behaviors in their general assessments of teachers and in their conversations about what teachers did to help them learn and engage. When children responded positively to teachers' *persona work*, they also reported feeling more interested and excited about the content and the teacher. When they responded negatively to teachers' expressive behaviors, they often also expressed dislike for the teachers themselves and for class in general. Further, as this section shows, children were quick to develop impressions of teachers based on teachers' expressive behaviors, but slow to change their impressions regardless of what teachers did expressively. The overarching purpose of this first section is to show that *persona work* was central for children, and fundamentally shaped their experience inside these classrooms. Earlier in this study I have argued that teachers always use expressive behaviors as they teach, whether they mean to or not,

and that their *persona work* is highly noticeable and potentially impactful on children. The first section verifies that claim.

In the second section of this chapter, I revisit the purposes for teachers' *persona work* from the perspectives of the children. This section shows that there was indeed a connection between the control teachers exerted through their *persona work* and their broader orchestration of classroom interaction. However, it also shows that at other points children did not always view teachers' expressive control positively. The section suggests that there were other expressive channels that were at least as important for helping teachers orchestrate interactions productively for children. Based on their comments, it appeared that children also needed teachers' *persona work* to continually convey teachers' regard for them as learners and thinkers. Children also felt that teachers' expressive behaviors should be equitable, and should help the children feel connected to the teacher, to one another, and to the class more broadly.

I end the chapter by taking a closer look at the *persona work* of one participating teacher, Ms. Williams. While in general children overwhelmingly had positive responses to the *persona work* of participating teachers, in two classrooms (both taught by Ms. Williams) many children of color especially responded negatively to their teacher and her *persona work*. I use these data to revisit the idea that teachers' *persona work* can expand intellectual and relational opportunities for some children while simultaneously limiting those of others. In particular, I show how Ms. Williams enacted expressive channels of control, connection, and regard through her *persona work* in ways that appeared to perpetuate larger patterns of inequity and racism in her classrooms.

Persona Work as Highly Visible to and Influential on Children

In this section, I describe how children in this study frequently referenced specific examples of teachers' expressive behaviors, demeanors, and patterns. It was apparent from their comments that children noticed teachers' *persona work* heavily, and that *persona work* informed children's larger impressions about teachers and classrooms and helped shape their experiences as learners. In talking about teachers' *persona work*, children revealed a clear relationship between what teachers did expressively and children's own behaviors and orientations. In other words, children were clearly influenced by teachers' *persona work*. For a conceptual map of this section, see Figure 6.2.
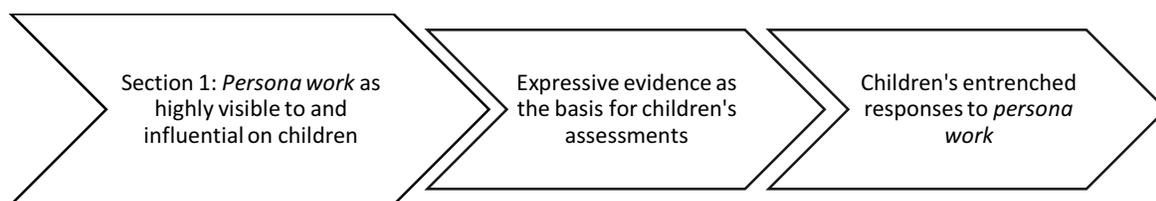
Figure 6.2. *Conceptual map, Section 1* ("Persona Work *as Highly Visible and Influential*").

This section begins by providing examples of expressive references children commonly used when talking about both the teachers in this study and others they had. It also describes how children's assessments of teachers based on teachers' *persona work* were often entrenched and hard to shake. This section is useful for framing the larger argument that *persona work* is central to and has the capacity to orchestrate many facets of classroom interaction in ways that are both positive and negative for students.

Expressive Evidence as the Basis for Children's Assessments

Most children in this study liked the participating teachers, and many used adjectives like "good," "nice," and "happy" when describing them. Further, they often provided examples of teachers' *persona work* as evidence for their assessments. For example, when asked how they *knew* teachers were "fun," many children said they looked for evidence like smiling, and when asked why some teachers were "nice," some said it was because teachers "never yelled" or "talked calmly." A child in Ms. Martin's classroom, for instance, said that "friendly" teachers "talked slow and smooth," and another student in her class argued that "nervous" teachers were always "talking and moving way too much."

Many children volunteered examples of teachers' expressive behaviors even when not explicitly prompted to do so. When asked to describe Ms. Voss to a child who had never met her, for example, one girl referred directly to Ms. Voss' expressive performance: "She will occasionally tell you a story, and she will sit on a stool and make *sure* you listen because of how she talks." Similarly, in response to a general question about "how Ms. Voss teaches," a boy in Ms. Voss' classroom immediately launched into a description of Ms. Voss' unique vocal performance, saying, "She opens with a question, and then changes voices to keep us on."

Sometimes the surveys administered to the children at the end of class allowed them to add other details about their teachers. Even here children directly referenced teachers' expressive

behaviors. For example, a seventh grader in Ms. Lombardi's class wrote that her teacher always "looked calm and smiled," and an eighth grader in Ms. Eichner's classroom said here that her teacher was "always upbeat and looking like she was having fun." A child in Ms. William's class wrote, her "voice is always cheerful," and another in Ms. Martin's classroom wrote, "she moves and talks at a good pace, but that's a good thing!"

Although (as described in the previous chapter) some of the participating teachers worried that their *persona work* might sometimes come across as artificial or inauthentic to children, many of the children seemed to feel, conversely, that their teachers' expressive displays were genuine. The students consistently asserted, for example, that teachers acted like "themselves," and that there was no difference between what teachers did in class and what they felt. In fact, often when the teachers participating in this study explicitly stated they were excited, angry, or upset—or when they provided clues through their voice or expression to this effect— the children parroted back the teacher's words when asked how they "felt" that day, seeming to take their teachers' statements of emotion quite literally. For example, after one class period when Ms. Martin told children she felt "happy but a little crazy," a handful of children similarly described her this way on their end-of-class surveys. Said one, "She said she was crazy today. But a happy crazy." Another wrote, "I guess she was happy because she said so. And crazy."

Further, many children considered teachers' expressive demeanors in the classroom as synonymous with "who" they were in other contexts. Whenever children were asked, for example, if they thought their teacher was *always* "like that," if they thought their teacher really "felt that way," or if she might be different with other people or in other parts of her life, children often seemed confused. "That's how she is," said a child in Ms. Williams' class. "What do you mean? She's just acting normal," said a student of Ms. Martin's, and, "She's always like that, that's just what she's like," said one of Ms. Voss' students. For many children, teachers' *persona work* was not a performance, but rather a real and true reflection of teachers' personalities, beliefs, and habits.

Across all classrooms, children were more than just *aware* of teachers' minute expressive behaviors throughout the day. Teachers' *persona work* seemed to lay the groundwork for children's larger assessments of teachers' ability, ethic of care, and level of understanding and interest. According to some children, they could even predict how a teacher "would be" right away, based on early expressive clues in the teacher's performance. "I know with the first word

they say," said one of Ms. Martin's students during a focus group. Another girl agreed, saying she could tell whether teachers would "be able to do a good job" almost immediately, based on "the way they talk—like, how energetic they are, and the way they use their voice. Like what kind of tone they use." In fact, many children alluded to developing firm ideas about their teachers' personalities, orientations to children, and skills early in the school year, all largely through evidence from teachers' expressive behaviors. This is discussed in more detail below.

Children's Entrenched Responses to *Persona Work*

Despite children's apparent awareness of and sensitivity to teachers' moment-to-moment expressive behaviors, many children also seemed to have some general ideas about their teachers that were hard to shake based on their *persona work*, even when teachers acted expressively *differently* than these ideas implied. Children's interpretations of their teachers' ubiquitous, changeable expressive performances seemed to coalesce in the hours, days and weeks they spent with children in the classroom. This appeared to create an entrenched schema in children's minds that helped them predict how teachers might act or communicate.

Many children, for example, felt they could correctly describe the path a teacher would travel in the classroom, how she might typically stand during a discussion, what her voice might sound like when asking children questions or yelling at them, or what her expression would be when she introduced a new idea. In response to the question, "Can you ever predict what your teacher might do?" many children gave affirmative answers. "One thing she does is she always walks around the classroom the same way," said one of Ms. Martin's students. "So, I know to be ready," he continued, joking. One of Ms. Eichner's students said, "When she stands by the wall over there, I know it's a problem and she wants us to get us together."

In fact, in several focus groups, children even liked to perform impressions of their teachers, and sometimes did so with startling accuracy, such as by mimicking how teachers spoke when giving directions or correcting a child. This occurred, for example, in both focus groups consisting of children in Ms. Voss' classrooms. Here, the children took turns acting out what she and other teachers said or did when they got angry. "Excuuuuse me," said one, in imitation of his math teacher. "Ahem!" said another. With each enactment, the children also adopted what they perceived to be the teachers' voices and expressions.

Children's entrenched ideas about how teachers typically acted or communicated were rarely shaken, even on days the children themselves described their teachers doing something

that ran *counter* to their schema for their behavior, such as by speaking in a very different tone or engaging with children in a way that seemed otherwise out of character. It was as if the children saw such momentary departures in teachers' typical ways of communicating or behaving as anomalies, and thus ignored them entirely or explained them away. For example, "She's nice," said one of Ms. Martin's students after a class in which Ms. Martin yelled at students. "Just not right now. But she's *always* nice." Once children established impressions of teachers, in other words, it took a lot for the teachers to seem to act "out of character" expressively and alter children's assessments.

In fact, among the children participating in the study, only one articulated a major shift in her impression of her teacher. She was a Black female student of Ms. Reid's, named Farrar. "From the beginning I didn't like her," said Farrar of Ms. Reid. She explained that she did not think Ms. Reid called on her enough, did not take her ideas seriously, and sometimes did not appear to listen to her at all. "She was rude," Farrar said. "I had her twice every day and I didn't have the patience."

Yet, midway through the school year, Farrar learned that Ms. Reid called her "smart" when speaking to Farrar's mother of her. When she heard about this, Farrar said she gradually went from thinking Ms. Reid was "rude" and "didn't listen" to believing she was one of the more attentive and interesting teachers she had. Farrar described Ms. Reid this way:

> I can feel, she's *into* it.…I just feel like she's able to communicate and help us feel *heard*.…Like she was talking to *you* to make sure *you* got it. She looks *at* me…
> Whenever she says the most important part of her statement she looks directly *at* me and then kind of roams, roams, roams.

Farrar's comment highlights the ways in which Ms. Reid purposefully makes eye contact with her and otherwise uses expressive behaviors to engage, affirm, and communicate her notice of Farrar. As Farrar described here, Ms. Reid looked directly at her as she taught, making her feel seen and heard rather than ignored and passed over.

According to Ms. Reid, "Once Farrar realized I was on her side, she totally changed," such as by following directions more readily, appearing to listen more in class, and engaging in personal conversations with Ms. Reid. Ms. Reid also said she doubled her own efforts to praise and acknowledge Farrar publicly and to check in with her privately every day, in hopes of perpetuating the positive upswing in their relationship. Yet had Farrar not learned of Ms. Reid's

compliment to her mother, had Ms. Reid failed to then single Farrar out, praise her, and give her additional opportunities and attention in class, and had Ms. Reid instead continued to interact with Farrar as she typically did, it is unclear whether Farrar's impression of Ms. Reid and general experience in class would have changed so dramatically.

The implications of the interactional shift in Farrar's relationship with Ms. Reid potentially sheds light on the multiple expressive "channels" through which teachers might communicate in their *persona work* to orchestrate classroom interaction. Toward the beginning of the year, Farrar felt Ms. Reid's *persona work* was disconnected and did not convey appropriate notice and regard for her as a learner. As a result, while Ms. Reid's expressive behaviors may have functioned in ways meant to *control* Farrar's interactions in the class and Farrar's relationship with the content, Farrar met that *persona work* with resistance. It was not until Ms. Reid also engaged expressively with Farrar in ways that also conveyed Ms. Reid's notice and regard and helped Farrar feel more connected that Farrar, in turn, appeared to change her mind about Ms. Reid, and about the class more broadly.

Farrar was the only student in this study to report such a major shift in her assessment of her teacher and in her response to her teacher's expressive style. However, it appeared that her shift in opinion was largely facilitated by a complete overhaul in Ms. Reid's interactional approach in terms of its frequency and quality, rather by a minor change in Ms. Reid's expressive performance. Although, in other words, many children seemed quick to establish impressions of their teachers based on how they spoke, moved, and otherwise communicated with children, it was not as easy for teachers uproot or alter those assessments, at least through their *persona work* alone.

In general, as the analysis here and in the section above shows, when children in this study "liked" their teachers or described them positively, they were more likely to also say they enjoyed class, gave their best effort, and were interested in one another's ideas. Conversely, when these children had negative reviews of either the teachers participating in the study or of others, they were also more likely to say they felt angry, stupid, disengaged, or less interested in school and less excited to engage in the work or share their thinking in class. This trend is in keeping with other research on children's orientations to teachers and school. Several studies have shown that when children feel positively towards their teachers, they tend to be more successful academically (Baker, 2006), have increased motivation and persistence around

academic work (Montalvo, Mansfield, & Miller, 2007; Raufelder, Scherber, & Wood, 2016), and often experience deeper levels of emotional and social engagement with the teacher, peers, and school (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011).

Children's Preferences for the Expressive Channels of Teachers' *Persona Work*

In the previous section, I described how the children in this study were highly attentive to teachers' expressive behaviors. I also argued that teachers' *persona work* could impact children's experiences in the classroom in ways that had lasting effects on students' engagement in class and with the teacher. Additionally, I suggested through my description of Farrar's relationship with Ms. Reid that to productively orchestrate classroom interactions for children it may be that teachers need to engage in *persona work* across several different expressive "channels."

This section draws on these ideas to show that while children were always *influenced* by *persona work*, its influence was not always positive, and teachers' *persona work* was not always useful for helping them orchestrate classroom interactions productively for all children. The children in this study had some clear ideas about what they looked for related to teachers' *persona work,* which I describe below. But they also noticed when the participating teachers (or, more commonly, other teachers they had at the time of this study or in the past) failed to expressively engage with them in the ways they desired.

In this section, I first describe how most children in this study regardless of race or gender hoped for three sweeping characteristics in teachers' *persona work*: they wanted teachers to convey their regard for children, they wanted to feel connected and noticed as learners, and they wanted to be treated in ways that were equitable and just. I then describe how children also had more specific ideas related to the ways they wanted teachers to use *persona work* to orchestrate classroom interaction in response to particular interactional conditions and dilemmas. For example, students had additional thoughts about ways they wanted teachers to orchestrate interactional conditions related to the environment, children's attention and engagement, the intellectual space of the classroom, and the teachers themselves. I end this section by briefly looking across children's comments to consider general patterns in what they hoped for in teachers' *personas*, especially in terms of the different expressive "channels" through which teachers might use *persona work* to orchestrate classroom interaction. For an overview of this section, see Figure 6.3 below.
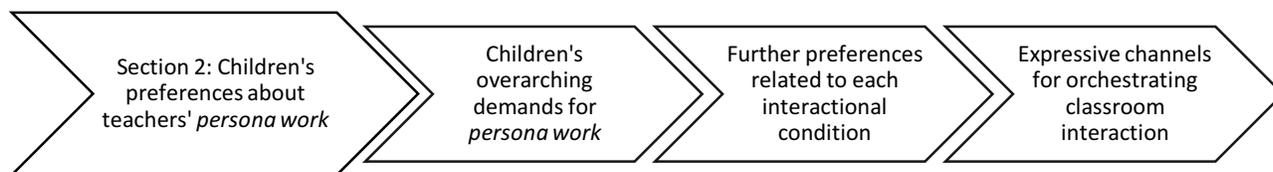
Figure 6.3. *Conceptual map, Section 2* ("Children's Preferences about Teachers' *Persona Work*").

Children's Overarching Demands for Teachers' *Persona Work*

Children overwhelmingly communicated three overarching ideas about their expectations and hopes for teachers' interactions with them in their written and verbal comments. They wanted teachers to notice them academically and otherwise communicate their intellectual regard for children. They also wanted teachers to learn about and engage with them in ways that implied they knew children as *students* and that thus helped children feel intellectually connected. Finally, children wanted teachers to interact with them in ways children deemed fair and consistent, rather than inequitable or unjust.

These interactional patterns were important for children regardless of their race and gender. In fact, at least half of the children (and often more) alluded to some or all of these ideas on their end-of-class surveys, and children also referred to these ideas during every focus group. In the section below, therefore, I show how in most cases children's views about the teachers and their *persona work* were overwhelmingly similar. Additionally, however, I also describe moments when occasionally a subset of students in this study—all of whom were children of color—had some additional, comparable things they hoped for in teachers' *persona work* related to these three interactional categories.

Although these preferences all relate broadly to different kinds of interactional work in teaching, such as by pertaining to teachers' differential treatment of children or provision of feedback, they are also, necessarily, expressed by teachers' *persona*. For example, it is through teachers' nonverbal behaviors such as facial expression and physical positioning in the room, that teachers might instrumentally convey their regard to children and help them feel differentially connected and noticed. Likewise, teachers' intonation, word choice, and the general underlying mood of teachers' talk can help children feel more or less noticed or connected. Therefore, although this section describes and attends to some aspects of classroom

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interaction have already been studied in other contexts, it does so specifically through the lens of teachers' expressive enactment of these categories of instructional work. In so doing, this section makes necessary connections between the ways children experience diverse (and potentially familiar) instructional and relational approaches and practices and teachers' *persona work*.

Children wanted to be noticed and acknowledged academically, through regard. A significant indicator for children of whether a teacher was "good," regardless of children's race or gender, related to the extent to which children felt teachers noticed and acknowledged them during class. Specifically, as will be described below, children wanted teachers to call on them, make eye contact, single them out through gesture, and otherwise convey to children through *persona work* that they were seen and heard, and that their ideas were appreciated. Children's assessments of participating teachers' proficiency at noticing and acknowledging them was the most variable over the days and weeks of this study. On days that children felt noticed by participating teachers, their other descriptions of that teacher were typically positive; when, in turn, they felt ignored by their teacher, even for just a small moment, the children's general descriptions of that teacher also skewed negative.

Within each classroom, however, most (and in the case of Ms. Voss and Ms. Lombardi, all) children felt participating teachers did a good job noticing them *overall*, particularly during whole class instruction. As primary evidence for this, children often cited moments when teachers called on them or otherwise publicly recognized their work or ideas. For example, "I honestly think she noticed me because I got called on a lot," said one of Ms. Voss' students. Another child in her class said, "[It makes me feel noticed] when she singles out an idea that I did well." "I feel like she is really good at connecting with lots of people because she makes eye contact and gestures. And if she's talking to one specific person you'll *know* she's talking to you," said a third student of Ms. Voss.

The children appeared to have some shared beliefs about *how* they most wanted these and other teachers to notice them, and when. For these children, not every type of "noticing" was equally powerful or influential for helping them feel "seen" or held in high regard by their teachers. Specifically, children wanted to be recognized by teachers in relation to their *academic* work and academic contributions in class, rather than desiring a more general or personal form of acknowledgement. They wanted, for example, teachers to elicit their ideas about the subject matter, to note aspects of the work that were especially easy or difficult for children, to make

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connections between children's ideas and the class discussion, and so on. They cared less about being acknowledged for their outfits or good attitudes, for example, or about being praised for their good behavior.

When referring to moments they felt "noticed," most children also referenced times when their teacher acknowledged them publicly, in the context of whole group instruction, such when teachers called on them when their hand was up, or when teachers "posted" children's ideas by repeating portions of their contributions for the whole group. Many children also drew on teachers' nonverbal clues that occurred in the whole class context as evidence for teachers' "noticing," such as by citing teachers' gaze during the whole class discussion, referencing a smile the teacher gave them, or citing a public "thumbs up." For example, when describing how she knew Ms. Eichner had noticed her one day, a child responded, "She noticed me today and answered my questions. She gave me eye contact." Similarly, one of Ms. Williams' students said she knew when her teacher noticed her because she "looks at you" —even when, she continued, Ms. Williams was technically talking to everyone.

Although most children felt sufficiently noticed and acknowledged by the participating teachers overall, not all did. Children of color especially were more likely cite times they were *systematically* not noticed or acknowledged, either by participating teachers or by other teachers at their school. Rather than feeling, through teachers' verbal attention, eye contact, or affirming body language that they were seen and heard, in these cases teachers give children the impression through their *persona work* of a *lack* of regard, especially in terms of children's intellectual work in the classroom.

For example, a child in Ms. Martin's class, a Black girl named Sydney, described feeling perpetually ignored by other teachers in favor of the White girls in the class:

> There's teachers here who favor all the White girls and it bothers me because… I'm over there, I'm trying my hardest, and they don't even acknowledge that. Like, so if you say something they'll just ignore it. That happened to me today, actually. So, I say it first, then she ignores me. They [White girls] say it, it's like, just this *marvelous* idea.

In this comment, Sydney described how she felt ignored due to her teachers' apparent lack of notice and regard for her ideas, and because of the teacher's lack of positive feedback. What was evident in Sydney's description was also the role of the teacher's expressive behaviors in conveying this lack of regard. As she spoke, Sydney mimed through her own body language and

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intonation her impression of the teacher in this moment. When she said, "They'll just ignore it," for example, she turned her back briefly. When she said the phrase "marvelous idea," she plastered a huge grin on her face and nodded frantically.

A child in Ms. Reid's class, a Black boy named Carl, said, "I have some teachers who will just stare the whole time. Mr. Warner stares…and he'll just look so you don't feel like he's looking at *you*." In contrast, Carl said, Mr. Warner often answered every question put to him by "White kids," and was more patient with them. Similar to Sydney, Carl too acted out his description expressively. As he described Mr. Warner's staring, he jutted out his chin, squinted his eyes, and held my own (the researcher's) gaze for several seconds. But when he said, "You don't feel like he's looking at *you*," Carl dramatically broke his gaze from mine, turning his head in the other direction. Again, while the lack of regard Carl described here related just as much to the content of the teacher's feedback as it did to his *persona work*, that feedback was *expressed* by Mr. Warner's expressive behaviors, and thus it was his *persona work* that ultimately left Carl with a negative impression.

In general, just as students felt noticed and acknowledged by being called on, by hearing their ideas in the whole class context, or by receiving nonverbal signals they were "seen" by teachers, they were equally aware of times this did *not* happen, such as when teachers avoided eye contact, did not call on them, did not appear to listen, or otherwise communicated poor attention or a lack of regard through their voice, body language, word choice, gaze, and other expressive moves. Further, especially for children of color who commonly reported the experience of feeling *perpetually* ignored by some (White) teachers, teachers' lack of expressive notice fundamentally appeared to influence both students' assessments of those teachers and their own sense of comfort and engagement in class. I return to these points later in the chapter.

Children wanted to feel connected and be known, but as *learners*. Nearly all children in this study said that "good" teachers also "knew" them. But as with their unique understanding of "noticing," what children meant by "knowing" was specific: above all, children wanted teachers to know and connect with them as learners and around their academic work. They wanted teachers to know how they learned best, what was easy or hard for them, what they felt about different assignments, and other things related to their learning process. Encapsulated by the following two responses of children from Ms. Eichner's class, often when children were asked, "Is it important for teachers to really know who you are?" they said something like, "Only

so much as it helps her teach us," and "It is not important for them to know *all* of me, but they should know how I learn."

One reason children wanted teachers to know them as learners was so teachers could be flexible and adaptive in how they taught different students. A child in Ms. Lombardi's class, for example, said her teacher knew her students well because, "some kids learn differently than others and when I have my bad days she knows." Two children in Ms. Reid's class likewise praised their teacher's understanding of them, saying, "she has different ways of teaching us" and "she knows us because she can adjust to fit your learning necessities." A child in Ms. Voss' class similarly said that her teacher knew the students because "she will talk to people a different way."

Several children in each class also indicated their desire for teachers to know something about their temperament, and to generally "understand" them. For instance, a child in Ms. Martin's classroom said, "I think it is easier to be around a teacher when you think they get you. They don't get impatient with you because if they take time out to understand and focus on you then it's easier to be in their class. To feel comfortable." Similarly, several children in Ms. Lombardi's classroom praised her capacity to intuit their mood and adapt her instruction and shape their experience in class accordingly:

> Student 1: When you come to the door she'll just know you're upset or something.
>
> Student 2: She'll hug you.
>
> Student 1: She's gonna, like, *stop* you.
>
> Student 3: For example, my mom texted me something happened. I was just like—I wanted to ask her [Ms. Lombardi] can I go outside. She'll understand.
>
> Student 2: It just feels like home in her class. Like, if you don't follow something for the first time—like, if you go to sleep, she'll wake you, she'll give you a chill pass and take a break and have you stand up and exercise. Other teachers, they just send you to the office.

Although this version of "knowing" also entailed some understanding of "who" children were outside of class, many children felt it was still necessary, especially in relation to their *academic* work. They did not want teachers to "know" about their moods, likes, and dislikes simply because they desired a personal connection with the teacher, but rather because they knew such knowledge would prompt teachers to adapt their teaching style and approach depending on how

children were feeling and would thus make the classroom a more comfortable, welcoming place for students. In this sense, children's preferences around being known were comparable to how they wanted to be noticed: in relation to the intellectual dimensions of classroom interaction.

At the same time, a handful of children of color in each class expressed their desire for teachers to also know more about their lives outside of school, their interests, and their families, especially in relation to their identity and culture, as they felt it would help teachers understand them better in class and engage with them more positively. For example, a child in Ms. Martin's class, a Black boy, said that because of his identity, "They [other teachers] might not understand where I'm coming from and they might not want to specifically talk to me." By getting to know him, he felt, teachers might "connect with me a little better, and listen." Another student, also a Black boy, praised Ms. Voss for doing just that. He said, "She understands where we're coming from. She understands the backgrounds of kids. Where we've been living, what types of races we are. She's bringing that all together in her teaching."

In fact, in several of these classrooms, many children of color praised teachers not only for their willingness to learn about students' lives, but for their small efforts to incorporate aspects of children's culture into their classroom culture and their teaching. A child in Ms. Williams' class, for example, a Black girl, said her teacher took the time to figure out the best way to address each child in her class, including learning nicknames and the correct pronunciation. This, the girl felt, made her feel more connected to her teacher and to the class. "If there is a certain name you should be called she will learn it and call you that, so she tries to connect with you in some certain way. That's what I like about her."

In a different of example, several students of Ms. Lombardi's, all Black girls, praised their teacher for being one of the only instructors at the school to allow what they called "their music" in class. They described how most White teachers at the school, in contrast, made them turn their music off by yelling, "No inappropriate songs!" But, "We would tell Ms. L. the song," began one child, "And she would laugh!" finished another. "She would enjoy the song! And now she plays stuff like that in class," said a third. While part of the girls' description simply implied that some teachers were more responsive than others to children's own experiences and cultural resources, it also conveyed a strong message about teachers' *persona work*. Ms. Lombardi's laughter was significant for these girls, representing something that felt to them entirely distinct from the raised voices and censorious language common in other teachers' expressive displays.

Children in Ms. Eichner's class similarly alluded to her incorporation of aspects of their lives and culture into her teaching. They pointed out her rare interest in their humor, and especially in what they termed "Black jokes." Some children of color also praised the fluidity of Ms. Eichner's language more generally, such as her tendency to learn about and occasionally take up aspects of her students' speech patterns, even when those students were racially and culturally different from her. One student of hers, a Black girl, commented on the rarity of this, saying, "Actually, it's weird, because she has a lot of Black kids [in her classrooms] so she tends to use the language and learn from the Black kids in her other classes."

Yet, although most children in this study said they wanted to be "known" by their teachers, many also stated that too *much* "knowing" was not a good thing. Many, regardless of race and gender, also referenced their desire to keep at least some part of themselves separate and private from their teachers and from school more generally. For instance, when asked if his teachers knew him, one seventh grader in Ms. Martin's class responded, "To be honest, I don't like to be understood." A child in Ms. Reid's class similarly stated, "If I was a mystery, no one would be able to solve me," and according to a student in Ms. Williams' class, "I don't need her to know me *that* well."

Some children similarly disliked moments when they felt teachers were *too* friendly and familiar, exemplified, for example, by too many uninvited questions about children's interests or home lives, or by times teachers inserted themselves into children's private conversations. Several eighth-grade girls in Ms. Reid's class, for instance, —all of whom were black—entreated teachers to avoid trying to be children's "best friends":

Student 1: Don't get into our personal lives. I was talking to [my friend] about something and she's [another teacher] like, "What was that, Anna? You can talk to me. We're friends."

Student 2: Mr. Y. does that all the time.

Researcher: You don't like that?

Students: *No*.

Student 3: I just want them to teach me the *stuff*. Don't be my best friend, don't try to be my best friend.

Student 2: I have plenty of best friends. I don't need any more.

Additionally, several children of color in each classroom also said they disliked when teachers were overly familiar with their personal space, such as by standing too close to them, touching their stuff, or putting a hand on their bodies. As one student of Ms. Williams', a Black girl, stated, "Don't *ever* touch me."

Finally, children of color especially sometimes expressed their suspicion of teachers' personal overtures when they took place in *lieu* of academic conversation, like when, for example, teachers talked to children about their weekend or about a sports event in the middle of a lesson or an independent conference. By engaging students in "personal" talk at such times, many children felt that teachers implied they were not *capable* of more "serious" talk about the subject matter. This was especially the case when, in the same lesson, they observed the teachers simultaneously engaging with other children about the content or children's intellectual ideas. For instance, "She never asks me about my work," criticized a child in Ms. Williams' class. "She knows *me*, but she doesn't know what I *do*."

Children wanted to be treated fairly and consistently across teachers' *persona work*. An implicit but potentially critical factor characterizing many children's assessments of their teachers in relation to the categories described above (e.g., noticing children, knowing children, etc.) was also the extent to which children felt teachers interacted with them in ways that were logical, consistent, and predictable. Relatedly, they were also sensitive to the degree to which they felt teachers were equitable and fair in their interactions. Not only did children want to be noticed, for example, but they wanted teachers' acknowledgement to happen *consistently* within and across class periods, and in ways that felt *equitable* when compared with teachers' notice of other children in the room.

Children in this study found continual, unpredictable shifts in teachers' expressive behaviors to be disconcerting and off-putting, and for some, such unpredictability led them to label teachers as "unfair" or "mean." Regardless of race or gender, many could cite instances when their teachers (and especially those *not* participating in this study) engaged with them in ways that felt inconsistent and, as a result, inequitable. One of Ms. Voss' students, for example, described the inconsistency in the teaching practice of a substitute teacher by saying, "One minute she's like this and then the next minute, snap, you don't know what you're going to get. She's smiling and then she's not. I don't like being in there." A child in Ms. Martin's class similarly cast the changeability and volatility of another teacher at the school in a negative light.

She said, "She can get sassy. At first she's really happy and everything and then it's like she changes… she's a different person."

In contrast, many children found the participating teachers fair and consistent (although not always, which will be taken up in more detail below). For example, "She listens to everyone," said a girl in Ms. Reid's class of her, and another agreed, saying she loved how Ms. Reid "treats all of us equal." Children in Ms. Eichner's room also commented on their teacher's fair treatment, as did the students in Ms. Martin's, Ms. Lombardi's, and Ms. Voss' classrooms. For example, when asked what else they wished they had been asked as part of the study, several students of Ms. Voss alluded to her fairness. One said, "If you had asked if I think my teacher is fair, I would have said yes." Another wrote, "If you would ask how does she treat us, I would say *wonderful*," and a third said, "What is one thing I liked today about my teacher? She was being nice to everyone in the class."

For most children, their desire for "consistency" and "fairness" did not mean children wanted teachers to engage with them in the *same* way, but rather that they wanted teachers to be equitable and thoughtful in their treatment of children, regardless of who students were or the teacher's own mood. In fact, sometimes children felt it was most fair for teachers to treat them somewhat *differently* from one another, given the differences in their interests and learning styles. Children wanted teachers to, as several children in Ms. Martin's class put it, "help everyone when they needed it"—but not always in the same way, or at the same time. For example, according to a child in Ms. Eichner's class, "She is a good teacher; I like how she acts towards kids due to their personalities." Children felt that slight variations in teachers' interactional style depending on whom it was they talked to actually signaled that the teacher really knew and understood them.

Most children did, however, associate the ideas of consistency and fairness with the equality of teachers' high expectations and regard for all children—even in cases when teachers slightly varied their interactional or expressive style with different students. Said a child in Ms. Martin's class, for instance, "She likes to think everyone has a chance to get better." Likewise, as a child in Ms. Lombardi's class described,

> She is a good teacher because not only does she focus on one student, she focuses on *all* students. Like, if they're having trouble or something she'll help them. Like, she'll focus on *any* student—just not *particularly* one. Like, she has no favorites.

Children generally wanted to feel that teachers had equal faith in them, regardless of children's learning style, ability, preferences, and so on. Fairness and consistency, in other words, were evidenced by teachers' equitable focus on and care for *everyone*, rather than for any one child or group of children. When teachers were fair, nobody was excluded, and nobody was treated as less than another. As described in previous sections, *all* children wanted teachers to engage with them around the academic content, for example, and every child wanted teachers to provide an equal opportunity to engage in class in ways that were serious and thoughtful.

Further Preferences Related to Each Condition of Classroom Interaction

The interactional preferences children had for their teachers related to academic noticing and regard, academic "knowing" and connecting with them as learners, and fairness and consistency all intersected with multiple aspects of teachers' *persona work*. For example, these preferences related to how teachers used voice and body language to engage with children around the content. They also related to how teachers used expressive behaviors in ways that appeared similar or different with different children (or groups of children).

Additionally, children also had some focused ideas about what they hoped for in teachers' *persona work* that correlated more closely with the different ways teachers could orchestrate conditions of classroom interaction. Specifically, children had thoughts about how they hoped teachers would orchestrate environmental interactional conditions, about how they wanted teachers to orchestrate conditions related to children's attention and engagement, about how they wanted teachers to engage expressively with the content, and about how they hoped teachers would manage their own *personas*. This is described below. As will be evident in the following sections, however, even in these closer descriptions of what they desired in teachers' expressive behaviors, the children remained preoccupied with considerations about equity, intellectual regard, and connection (as expressed through teachers' *persona work*).

Orchestrating the Environmental Conditions

Children talked the least about teachers' use of expressive behaviors to orchestrate or manage aspects of the classroom environment—with one exception. Overwhelmingly, children agreed that teachers should appear "in control" of the class. Regardless of race or gender, they felt that the extent to which teachers came across as competent and in control often correlated positively with teachers' effectiveness at helping them learn. As one child said, being "in

control" means "just acting like a teacher." In fact, many children said one of the most frustrating things for them was being unable to concentrate without having to manage distractions from other children. They expressed a preference for teachers who kept order and maintained an atmosphere of peace, calm, and predictability, even if this meant the teachers sometimes had to tell children what to do and, as a girl in Ms. Martin's class put it, "when to stop doing it."

Although children desired teachers who appeared "in control," they did not want teachers wielding their power in the classroom indiscriminately, thoughtlessly or harmfully. Referring to a negative experience she had with another teacher at the school, for example, a child in Ms. Reid's class recommended, "Don't be a teacher who has a superiority complex and when they're wrong they get all huffy." A student in Ms. Eichner's room offered a related reminder, intended for new teachers: "They were once kids, they understand how class works, [so] don't be yelling and telling them [students] all different things and nobody understands them."

According to children, most participating teachers were very good at appearing "in control" of their classes, and did so in ways children responded to positively. In fact, some children said that several of these teachers could manage and influence children's behavior through their presence alone. For instance, they said Ms. Voss did not have to say a thing, but needed only to walk into the room, or to stand there, and the children would fall in line. As one child from her classroom described, "She has experience, so we know that she means business because she's been a teacher for a long time so we know that she knows our every single thought." Another agreed, saying, "It's the difference between her and subs and newer teachers and stuff.... When she just walks into the room everyone just gets quiet."

In general, when referring to the ways they hoped teachers might orchestrate environmental conditions, children did indeed point out their desire for teachers to exert control over children and classroom interaction. However, they also tempered this demand. These data implied that for these children, "control" also needed to be couched in respect and regard. In other words, while teachers should be "in control," they should not have what the child above termed "a superiority complex."

Orchestrating Conditions Related to Children

This category describes how children referred to aspects of teachers' *persona work* as being helpful—or harmful—for engaging and focusing students' minds. Specifically, they talked

about wanting teachers to inspire and maintain their intention, and also to infuse joy into the lesson. Doing so, the children said, helped them feel more connected and engaged.

Many children in this study wanted teachers to communicate in ways that grabbed their attention and helped them to engage in the lesson. As a seventh grader in Ms. Martin's class put it, "Some teachers, they're boring. They make me stop paying attention." In contrast, children expressed the desire for teachers who spoke or moved in interesting ways, who infused in their expressive performances a sense of fun and excitement and who otherwise knew how to generate enthusiasm in children and appeared joyful. Many felt, in fact, that the teachers participating in this study did just that, such as by appearing passionate about what they taught, altering their voice or gestures compellingly to capture children's attention, or exuding joy and humor as they taught in ways that helped keep children engaged.

When talking about ways participating teachers were engaging or interesting, for example, children commonly pointed to moments teachers were "excited" or "enthusiastic." For instance, in Ms. Voss' classroom, one boy said a main reason he liked her was that "she'll say something exciting." Likewise, a girl in Ms. Lombardi's class positively described her as "energetic, always trying to get us going," and another girl in Ms. Williams' class said she was one of her favorite teachers because Ms. Williams "gets us excited and leaves us in suspense."

According to many children, teachers' intonation and gestures were especially powerful tools for sparking and sustaining their interest. "Her voice makes me hook into it," said one of Ms. William's students when describing how her teacher helped her stay focused and interested. A child in Ms. Martin's class similarly said, "She uses her hands and uses words that are easy to listen to." In Ms. Voss' class, one child complimented her for her "powerful use of words," and another agreed, explaining that she often spoke in a way that "caught your interest" and "sounded smart." Likewise, a boy in Ms. Eichner's class praised her several times for speaking in a way that he felt had "good sense." This meant, according to him, that she was careful to use words that were clear and interesting, and that her language helped connect him to what she was teaching.

Many children also seemed to think that these moments in which their teachers spoke and moved "powerfully," with "good sense," or in otherwise compelling ways coincided with times when the teachers themselves were most interested in what they taught. A girl in Ms. Martin's class, for example, said that the "way she [Ms. Martin] read the passage made me think it was

one of her *favorite* poems." Likewise, after one of Ms. Williams' classes, most students flagged an instance when Ms. Williams was explaining the idea of tectonic plates to the class as her favorite part of class, which also happened to be a moment when Ms. Williams herself was the most animated, speaking loudly and dramatically and making sharp gestures that mimicked the collision of two tectonic plates. In fact, children sometimes indicated that their teachers' apparent excitement about and interest in the content also, as one put it, "got them going," and sparked their own interest. For example, a child in Ms. Voss' class said, "She [Ms. Voss] might be kind of strongly pushing an idea and I can see that her feeling, her using that way of talking made *us* feel strongly about it too."

More than any other aspect of teachers' expressive performance, in fact, the children praised participating teachers' sense of humor and their apparent joy when working with children. For example, a girl in Ms. Eichner's class said, "I love it when she lets us laugh and she laughs with us," and a boy in Ms. Voss' class said that his favorite thing about her was when she "gets funny and crazy with us." Children often indicated the participating teachers' humor and joy were stronger than that of other teachers, and that it signified they were also more patient and kind. For instance, according to a child in Ms. Lombardi's class,

> Unlike most teachers, out of all the teachers I've ever had, Ms. Lombardi doesn't get mad too easily. And also she has a sense of humor not like many of my teachers have. Like make jokes in class, like they're all about working stuff."

Even when teachers did not typically make jokes themselves, but rather smiled and laughed at things *children* said, students commonly labeled them "funny" and "nice." For example, although sometimes sarcastic, Ms. Reid rarely made any overt jokes, but she commonly asked children to repeat their own witty or humorous asides for the class. When they did, she often laughed alongside students. Many children identified her as "funny" in their end-of-class surveys, and according to one child in her class, her classroom was a "warm environment when you walk in the door. You can see a smile on her [Ms. Reid's] face." Like Ms. Reid, Ms. Williams too hardly ever made jokes herself, but a handful of students nevertheless praised her laughter and her smiles and what they perceived as her general good humor, and a few said she was one of their "funniest" teachers.

For the children in this study, teachers' humor and joy appeared to serve many purposes. Some said it helped them stay focused and engaged in the lesson. "Jokes keep us interested," said

a boy in Ms. Voss' classroom, "and we *wouldn't* be if she was just talking." Similarly, a boy in Ms. Eichner's classroom said one of his favorite things about her was how she "adds humor to wake me up." He said that, in contrast, many other teachers put him to sleep by talking in a boring monotone and failing to say or do anything that helps "grab the attention."

Jokes and laughter also appeared, for some children, to help humanize their teacher and personalize instruction. Several, for example, said their teachers' jokes created a sense of camaraderie with and among students, providing a shared opportunity for laughter and a common point of interest, and implying the teacher did not take herself too seriously. Children in Ms. Voss' classroom felt she was especially proficient at this. According to one,

> I like it when she'll make a joke and then the whole class laughs. Sometimes teachers will make a joke and it might be something we do not know a reference to, but she [Ms. Voss] makes a joke and we all laugh…. It just kind of reminds us that she's human, she's not just someone there who teaches us. And also it's one of the points where we can all laugh.

Especially students of Ms. Voss and Ms. Lombardi also described how these two teachers wielded humor not just to connect with the group, but to also affirm and strengthen their connection with a single child. Many children said, for instance, that the teachers made them feel special and known by publicly engaging them individually with a joke, or by teasing them. A boy in Ms. Voss' class, for example, praised her because, "She makes jokes, not rude jokes, that pertain to me." Another of Ms. Voss' students said, "Once she [Ms. Voss] gets to know you she can have more fun with you." Likewise, a child in Ms. Lombardi's class cited her teacher's laughter and humor as evidence for the fact that "she notices everybody, every day."

A final effect of teachers' humor was suggested by nearly all the children of color in Ms. Eichner's eighth grade classroom. They described Ms. Eichner as especially open and flexible when it came to appreciating something funny and making space for children's own jokes and humor, especially when compared to other White female teachers at the school. On one end-of-class survey, for example, nearly *all* children of color shared the same "favorite memory" about Ms. Eichner in a write-in question. Each referenced a time early in the year when Ms. Eichner laughed hard at what many children termed a "Black joke." When asked about this in a focus group, one child, a Black girl, described the event this way:

Okay, you remember the Donkey Game? You have to run… and Brian wasn't going fast enough and D'Angelo was like, 'If you don't get your Black self…' Ms. Eichner was cracking *up*. She was *red* and everything.

For this child and several other children of color in the focus group, Ms. Eichner's reaction was unexpected and unusual, but no less appreciated. It was one of the first times, they said, that a White teacher laughed at one of what many termed one of "their" jokes. "She's not afraid to laugh *with* us," explained one child in the focus group, a Black boy.

In contrast, children of color in Ms. Eichner's class said it was more typical for White female teachers at Apple Creek to shut down their jokes rather than laugh with them—even when these jokes occurred on students' own time, such as at recess. "It is like they think our jokes are racist," laughed one student, a Black girl. Another girl agreed, saying, "It's the Black jokes. They don't seem to like that." The girls' sentiments were echoed by three other students in Ms. Eichner's classroom, all of whom were also Black:

Child 1: I've been to this school for three years so I know who not to say jokes next to or anything.

Researcher: What goes wrong?

Child 1: Like, Ms. [names another White female teacher]. She has these blue eyes and she just *stares* at you. You say a joke, everybody laughs, but turn around and she stares at you. And it wasn't even about *anything*.

Child 2: And she don't say anything, she just stares, like [mimes staring, eyes squinted, face hard and still, chin jutted out].

Child 3: Yeah! [Laughs.] She's like, "Was that appropriate to say?"

As these children did here, many of the students of color in Ms. Eichner's class described commonly facing the sanction, judgment, and blame of White female teachers at Apple Creek in response to their humor, even when the jokes were not negative or overtly about race. In contrast, Ms. Eichner's spontaneous, joyful laughter at D'Angelo's joke was unexpected, something many of these children had not previously experienced in their interactions with a White teacher in their three years at Apple Creek.

Orchestrating Conditions Related to the Content

As I described above, most of the children surveyed and interviewed as part of this study said they wanted teachers to engage with them in ways that showed they noticed and "knew"

children academically, as learners. Additionally, however, many children also had concrete ideas about how they wanted teachers to deliver instruction, and specifically about what they hoped for in terms of teachers' expressive performance of instructional explanations.

Specifically, when asked why they thought teachers were "good," many children indicated that one reason related to the teacher's proficiency at giving lucid and compelling instructional explanations. A child in Ms. Eichner's class said, "[She is good] because she explains things really good"; one in Ms. Martin's room said, "[She is good] because when she teaches she explains what she is trying to teach"; one of Ms. Voss' students said, "Yes [she is good] because she is always explaining things to make sure we know"; and a child in Ms. Reid's class said, "She always makes sure you know the info in the best way." For these and other students, part of what made their teachers' explanations so "good" had to do with the fact that teachers said things clearly and succinctly, and that they did not become distracted or provide too much information at once. Teachers who children felt gave good explanations simply, as one of Ms. Lombardi's students put it, "got more done with kids."

Although certainly teachers' capacity to craft compelling, lucid explanations intersects with many other aspects of the work of teaching, it is also specifically related to teachers' *persona work*. As children's comments showed, the felt "good" explanations were succinct and engaging, such as due to teachers' choice of words, their intonation as they spoke, and the compelling ways they used gesture. One child in Ms. Voss' class said, "I want it to feel exciting when teachers explain things, but also have it so I understand things." As with other aspects of teachers' work described above (e.g., the differential feedback they provided children), therefore, teachers' explanations indeed embody their own category of teaching practice—and yet, the ways in which teachers *conveyed* those explanations was through their *persona*. Thus, in children's minds it appeared that *what* teachers said in their explanations related closely to how they expressively said it.

For example, several children in each classroom praised their teacher's capacity to, as one of Ms. Eichner's students put it, "speed up or slow down" depending on how quickly it appeared children were understanding. A student in Ms. Martin's class likewise praised her teacher's ability to vary her explanations based on differences in how children learn:

> [Ms. Martin] answers questions really well. [She] gets on your level. Some people learn
> in a more complex way and some people need it to be broken down. Like, some things, I

just don't get it, and I need her to come down to me so I can go up, and I think she does a really nice job of explaining to me in a way I can understand. Like, maybe when she explains it to me it is in a different way than with [another student].

In fact, the children in this study were not always complimentary of teachers' explanations (including those of the teachers participating in this study), in part because of teachers' expressive style when talking. For example, a boy in Ms. Reid's class felt that she sometimes "babied" children when explaining things. "She explains the things that are easy to understand, like 'Don't forget the format.' And we're like, *oh my god* I understand the format, can you talk about the *content*, I don't *get* it." Children also became frustrated when participating teachers "talked down to them" or repeated words too often, or when their explanations were, in children's minds, simply boring. In general, children seemed to want teachers to strike a balance between giving them enough information to help them do the work successfully and not actually doing the work *for* them through their explanations and other content-related talk.

Orchestrating Conditions Related to the Teacher

When talking about what how they wanted teachers to appear when interacting with the class, many children indicated they hoped teachers would look like they were "in control." I described this above. For some of the children in this study, being "in control" meant not just firmly managing children, but also being in control of oneself. They wanted teachers, for example, to reign in emotional displays they felt implied something negative about children or about the teachers themselves. They also said teachers' excess emotions could be instructionally distracting.

Many children, for example, spoke of how off-putting they found the palpable anxiety of substitutes or newer teachers. Said one child in Ms. Voss' classroom, student teachers were always "getting nervous because they don't know what to do." An eighth-grade girl from Ms. Reid's class echoed the sentiment, saying that often newer teachers and substitutes acted "as if they were scared of us." Instead, she said, "I wish she would just calm down and teach." For these children, however, teachers' nervousness read somewhat differently. Ms. Reid's student, for example, said, "I can hear it in their voice, or sometimes they don't look at us" when asked what teachers' anxiety might look like. Ms. Voss' student was less specific, saying, "It just feels like they aren't in control."

Children also pointed out ways they felt participating teachers themselves did not always have sufficient grip on their emotions and expressive behaviors. For example, several children said they could tell when Ms. Williams was frustrated, either with them or with the class, even when they knew she did not want them to know. When this happened, one child said, "her voice doesn't change much. Not at all. She still acts really nice." Rather, the children said there was something subtle in her expression that was a "give away" that she was upset, despite her efforts to pretend otherwise. "She won't make it known, she'll act like it's cool," said another, "But it's her *face*." When asked what the expression looked like, the children performed, rather than described it. Two of them pursed their lips and squinted their eyes in similar ways, and then darted quick looks around the room. The third simply shrugged, saying, "It just feels like she doesn't *enjoy* us."

For many children, teachers that had control over themselves also did not act in ways that were volatile or unpredictable. Above all, children in every classroom hated when teachers yelled at them "for no reason." When teachers yelled, many said, it meant they behaved unfairly and did not listen. According to these children, although the participating teachers typically avoided yelling, many other teachers engaged in it regularly. For example, one of Ms. Martin's students juxtaposed her with other teachers, saying, "She's [Ms. Martin] never uptight. She never yells. She doesn't. I can't think of a teacher who doesn't yell. Like, most of them yell at you and that's it. But she gives you time to know what your mistakes are."

The desire many children expressed for teachers to stay calm and rational and avoid volatile or irrational emotional displays did not mean they believed teachers should *never* get upset, especially when they felt teachers had good reason. For instance, many of Ms. Lombardi's students described their teacher's emotional displays positively. Said one, "She gets mad for good reasons. … Let's just say I fill out a paper, right? And I get an 'F' on it. And then I didn't even *try* but it's a *big* grade. She'll get mad." Similarly, another child in her class recalled Ms. Lombardi's anger after reviewing an assignment most children completed carelessly. "One time she threw papers across the room because they were really bad," he said, "but that was the only time I've seen her really, *really* mad."

According to many of Ms. Lombardi's students, when she lost control and became angry, it was often justified, predicated on the fact that the children themselves were not living up to what they knew to be her high academic expectations of them. In fact, when recounting such

stories of Ms. Lombardi's "anger," many children did so laughingly. They appeared to view her anger as not only logical, but also affirming, evidence that Ms. Lombardi cared about them and their work.

In general, children wanted teachers to maintain control over themselves and their emotions in cases when their *losses* of expressive control were likely to impede their relationships with children or students' learning. But when teachers' emotional displays implied strong undercurrents of care or helped children feel more interested and engaged in class, children seemed to appreciate and desire them, at least occasionally. They appeared to affirm the children and help to humanize the teachers.

Expressive Channels for Orchestrating Classroom Interaction

Broadly speaking, it seemed as if the 220 children participating in this study often wanted similar things from teachers and their *persona work*, regardless of their race or gender. They wanted teachers to use *persona work* in ways that implied they noticed and understood children, and children also wanted to feel connected to and interested in instruction through teachers' *persona work*. Children desired teachers who were expressively in control of themselves and who wielded *persona work* in ways that helped to manage the chaos of the classroom. Finally, children wanted teachers who were consistent and equitable in their expressive patterns.

The commonalities across children's hopes for teachers' *persona work* are compelling. First, they provide good evidence that teachers' expressive behaviors were highly noticeable to and influential on children. Second, the large agreement across children's views of teachers' *persona work* also hints at the existence of some shared considerations related to how teachers might use expressive behaviors productively across multiple classrooms and among many different children.

The subtle differences in children's reactions are equally significant. This analysis points to the fact that, although participating teachers' *persona work* may have functioned effectively for most of the children in this study, it did not work well for every child all the time. In some cases, (mostly other) teachers' *persona work* even appeared to alienate children and diminish their broader sense of connection to the class. Taken together, these ideas point to the fact that while sometimes teachers appeared to be using *persona work* in ways that productively orchestrated classroom interaction for some children, some of the time, at other points the control

they exerted through their *persona work* could simultaneously, subtly limit the relational and intellectual opportunities for at least a small handful students.

As was evident through analysis in the previous chapter, teachers saw their expressive behaviors as tools for controlling the content, the norms and structures of the classroom, the children, and even themselves. In contrast, while children also perceived teachers' *persona work* as a form of expressive control, their understanding of "control" appeared to be more nuanced and tempered by additional ideas about what teachers needed to do expressively when engaging with them. For example, children also needed to feel connected to and well-regarded by those teachers. "Connected," for children, meant that teachers used expressive behaviors in ways that helped children feel noticed and liked and which conveyed to children teachers' interest in engaging with them and knowing them as learners. "Regard," on the other hand, seemed for these children to mean being acknowledged and respected intellectually by teachers, as communicated through teachers' *persona work*. For example, children felt "regarded" when teachers used their expressive behaviors to create and encourage opportunities for students to engage with the teacher and the class in relation to the subject matter.

In general, the extent children felt themselves "liked by," "connected to," or "well regarded" by their teachers—especially as learners—correlated with students' desire to also be "controlled" by those teachers' expressive behaviors. As analysis from the previous section showed, for example, children sometimes *wanted* the structure and control teachers imposed on classroom interaction through their *persona work*, so long as that control was wielded responsively, warmly, and reasonably. Likewise, when children did not respond well to teachers' expressive control, they were nevertheless more forgiving and willing to "look the other way" if in general they felt connected to and positively regarded by that teacher. In other words, children who typically felt more "liked" or acknowledged by the teacher tended also to excuse or overlooked fleeting moments when that teacher yelled, acted irrationally, or otherwise used *persona work* in ways that were expressively different and unpredictable. In contrast, as the previous sections also showed, children were much more censorious of teachers who engaged in controlling expressive behaviors with whom they felt *no* connection, from whom they intuited no academic regard, or who used *persona work* in ways that were consistently inequitable.

The intersectional relationship between how teachers used *persona work* to exert control, convey regard, and inspire among children a sense of connectedness is perhaps not surprising,

given some of the research. Researcher Jean Baker (2006), for example, examined the effects of the relationships between 1,310 diverse elementary students and their 68 teachers in elementary classrooms, comparing items from the *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale* (Pianta, 2001) to two different measures of academic achievement. She concluded that the "closer" students perceived themselves to be to teachers relationally (e.g., through feelings of trust, warmth, and low levels of conflict), the more likely they were to show positive academic outcomes and growth. Baker also found an inverse correlation between close relationships among students and teachers and behavioral interventions teachers needed to make with children. Similarly, Roorda et al. (2011) also found a positive correlation between "positive" relationships between teachers and children and higher levels of what they termed "student engagement." Although the specific constructs used in each of these studies were general and might potentially imply different things about the specific interactions between teachers and children, the studies nevertheless underscore the point (in broad strokes) that when children like and respect a teacher (and believe that teacher similarly "likes" and has high regard for them), they may be more likely to engage in instruction and in class more broadly and adhere to the teacher's demands.

Taken together, the analysis presented thus far and in the previous chapters implies that there are likely multiple expressive "channels" through which teachers might engage in *persona* work—e.g., control, connection, and regard. How teachers use and combine these channels is likely to lead them to orchestrate classroom interaction in very different ways for different children. These findings show that teachers may need to filter their expressive behaviors through multiple channels when using *persona work* if they want to maximize the likelihood all children will learn and engage. For example, if teachers want to "control" children's minds or bodies by using their *persona* to help direct children's attention to themselves, to specific aspects of the content, or to different parts of the classroom, it may be that they also need to convey through their *persona work* their intellectual regard for children or help children feel connected to themselves or the class. In so doing, teachers may be more likely to make it so children *desire* the control teachers also exert through their *persona work*, rather than resist it.

Children's Uneven Responses to Teachers' *Persona Work* and Expressive Inequity

I end this chapter by again considering the different "channels" of teachers' expressive work, what they entail, and their effects on children, but from a somewhat different angle. Specifically, I look at uneven patterns in children's responses to one teacher in particular, Ms. Williams. I then consider what differential patterns in children's responses to teachers' *persona work* might mean more broadly.

Across all participating classrooms, children generally had positive things to say about participating teachers. They typically rated teachers at least an "eight out of ten" on a ten-point scale, and sometimes even jokingly threw out numbers like "fifteen" to show how much they liked them. Many children said participating teachers were fair, funny, kind, and thoughtful, especially when compared to other teachers the children had at the time of the study or before. In fact, although occasionally children had negative things to say about these participating teachers, such comments were typically very rare.

In comparison to their generally positive responses to participating teachers, the children praised other teachers much less, and when they did, their praise was often lukewarm. "They're okay," said one of Ms. Eichner's students of her other teachers that year. "Nothing really bad or good." Another child in Ms. Eichner's classroom said, "I don't know, my other teachers are all fine. They're, like, always acting like *teachers*." In contrast, many children in this study appeared to believe that participating teachers did just a little a bit *more* than those teachers children had in the past or at the time of the study. Participating teachers, for example, were "more fun," "more open to different ideas," "more understanding," "calmer," "smarter," and "fairer."

However, one participating teacher, Ms. Williams, did not earn nearly the same level of praise from children. In each end-of-class survey, more students praised her than criticized her, but this margin was narrow compared to the nearly unanimous accolades the other participating teachers received from children. Further, praise for Ms. Williams came predominantly from the White students, whereas criticism was almost entirely leveled at her from children of color, and especially from Black students. This pattern of criticism is also mirrored in the two focus groups with Ms. Williams' students, where the White children were typically more positive about Ms. Williams than were children of color.

This final section explores why Ms. Williams was the only teacher to receive such high levels of criticism from students, and why children of color especially were negative about her. It considers what children's negative assessments had to do with Ms. Williams' *persona work*. It then draws on these data to consider more broadly ways in which teachers' *persona work* might both foster and impede children's learning and engagement, depending on the expressive channels through which it is enacted. Relatedly, the section considers what teachers' *persona work* has to do with teachers' capacity to orchestrate classroom interaction more broadly in ways that were productive for all. For an overview of this section, see Figure 6.4.
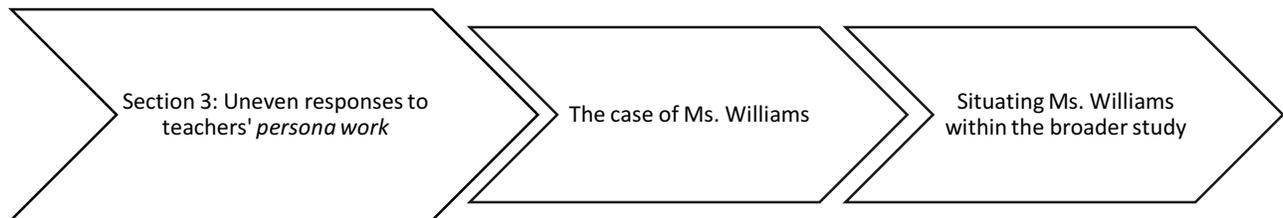
Figure 6.4. *Conceptual map, Section 3 ("Uneven Responses to Teachers'* Persona Work*").*

The Case of Ms. Williams

In focus groups and end-of-class surveys, children participating in this study were often very positive about the participating teachers, especially in comparison to others they had. However, there was one exception. The children in Ms. Williams' classrooms were much more likely to offer some critique of her teaching or her *persona work* specifically, either through general negative descriptions (e.g., calling her "boring" or "rude") or through specific negative examples (e.g., "She never pays attention to me"). To illustrate the comparison, Table 6.3 (below) summarizes the percent of children in each class who provided one or more negative assessments of participating teachers on each end-of-class survey. As the top two rows of the table show, while the number of critiques children offered of Ms. Williams remained low, they were still much higher than children's negative assessments of any other participating teachers. In fact, as evidenced by the table, in many cases other teachers received no critiques at all from children on these surveys.

Table 6.3

Percent children negatively assessing teachers on end-of-class surveys—All classes, all children

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3	Survey 4	Survey 5
Williams #1	19%	39%	76%	23%	27%
Williams #2	18%	16%	24%	57%	27%
Voss	8%	8%	4%	4%	3%
Martin #1	7%	14%			-
Martin #2	-	7%	-	-	-
Lombardi	8%	-		-	-
Eichner	4%	12%	8%	-	2%
Reid	8%	-	12%	12%	

A further pattern emerged in the data regarding children's negative assessments. Not only did Ms. Williams receive far more negative assessments than did the other teachers, but they were also largely from children of color (and Black students in particular) in both surveys and focus groups. This trend is illustrated in Table 6.4 and Table 6.5, specifically in relation to the end-of-class surveys.

Table 6.4

Percent children who assessed Ms. Williams negatively, by race—Survey data, Class 1

Total negative responses	Percent of all negative survey responses				Children of Color		White Children	
	Black	Hispanic	Asian	White	% all negative responses	% total children of color responding	% all negative responses	% total White children responding
Survey 1 (n=5)	100%	-	-	-	100%	24%	-	-
Survey 2 (n=11)	91%	-	-	9%	91%	42%	9%	14%
Survey 3 (n=19)	74%	5%	-	21%	79%	71%	21%	40%
Survey 4 (n=6)	83%	17%	-	-	100%	35%	-	-
Survey 5 (n=6)	83%	-	-	17%	83%	29%	17%	20%

Table 6.5
Percent children who assessed Ms. Williams negatively, by race—Survey data, Class 2

Total negative responses	Percent of all negative survey responses				Children of Color		White Children	
	Black	Hispanic	Asian	White	% all negative responses	% total children of color responding	% all negative responses	% total White children responding
Survey 1 (n=5)	60%	20%	20%	-	100%	26%	-	-
Survey 2 (n=5)	80%	20%	-	-	100%	28%	-	-
Survey 3 (n=7)	71%	29%	-	-	100%	41%	-	-
Survey 4 (n=12)	66%	17%	-	17%	83%	59%	17%	20%
Survey 5 (n=6)	83%	17%	-	-	28%	38%	-	-

The first columns of these tables show the percent of children within each racial group who wrote something negative about Ms. Williams on their survey. The tables also show the broader division between the percent of negative survey responses provided by children of color versus White children. For example, in the first survey for Ms. Williams' second class, 100% of negative responses were provided by children of color. Because different numbers of children of each racial group responded to each survey, the tables additionally indicate the percentage of children who were White versus children of color within each survey who negatively assessed their teacher. For example, for the first survey in Class 2, 26% of the total children of color responding to the survey in Ms. Williams' class that day gave her a negative review.

Evident across these tables are two important trends. First, as already mentioned, the majority of negative assessments of Ms. Williams were from children of color. Second, in contrast, these negative assessments typically did not represent the majority of children's voices, even among children of color. For example, for the second class, the only time more children of color assessed Ms. Williams negatively than positively was in the fourth survey. Nonetheless, these numbers are still significant. Other participating teachers received very few negative assessments from children in general, and there were also no correlations between these few negative assessments and children's race. In contrast, in both Ms. Williams' classes it was apparent that, compared to their White classmates, children of color were much more likely to respond to Ms. Williams negatively.

Patterns implicit in children's negative assessments. There were several common reasons children of color gave for their negative assessments of Ms. Williams. They related to (a) her excessive control over the intellectual airspace and physical environment of the classroom; (b) children's lack of connectedness with Ms. Williams and their feeling she did not like them; and (c) Ms. Williams' apparent lack of intellectual notice and regard for children of color. I describe these critiques in more detail below.

Problem of intellectual and environmental control. Many children of color were much more critical of Ms. Williams' expressive behaviors than were the other students, and especially of what they saw as her excessive movement and talking. They appeared to feel these expressive behaviors were physically or intellectually stifling. For example, one major critique of many children of color in both of Ms. Williams' classes, and especially Black boys, was that she talked too much. Their critique included comments like, "She talks way too much," "She loves talking," "She's not good because she talks too much," or "She talked so much she didn't give us time to work." Children even mentioned Ms. Williams' excessive talk in the space allotted for write-in comments in their end-of-class surveys. "Stop talking and let <u>us</u> talk!" wrote one child, a Black boy. Another wrote, "The problem with her is that she keeps talking while we wanted to talk."

It seemed, therefore, that Ms. Williams' talk was not only irritating and distracting for children, but also interfered with what they saw as their *own* opportunities to speak. Her talk seemed to overpower their own voices. In other words, through her *persona work* these children felt that Ms. Williams controlled the airspace of the room in ways that were intellectual limiting and stifling. Additionally, their comments intimated that Ms. Williams' talk was also simply exhausting and distracting, and impeded their ability to focus on their work.

More than other students in her class, children of color were also more likely to criticize Ms. Williams for what they thought of as her excessive movement. A handful children of color in each of her classes consistently reported finding her movement annoying and, according to some, disruptive. In fact, for some her nonstop back-and-forth momentum throughout the classroom made it difficult for them to concentrate on their work. "It's annoying," said one, a Black girl, and another Black girl said of it, "I can't focus when she is always walking around like that!" Just as she took over the "airspace" of the class through her constant talk, here it seemed that children were responding negatively to Ms. Williams' apprehension of and control over the *physical* space of the classroom. In fact, her continual pacing was twice the source of

children's joking during focus groups. One of her students, a Black boy, joked, "Ms. W., she and I must both have the same Fitbit because I'm pretty sure she likes to get her steps in." Another student, this time a Black girl, grinned and said, "She's always walking around, picking on students, walking around, picking on students. I feel like *I* should be a teacher because I do that too!"

Problem of connection. Additionally, children of color expressed a common concern that Ms. Williams ignored them, and some felt that, as a result, she did not like them. For example, when asked what she noticed about them on different class days, at least one-third of the children of color in her classes typically said, "nothing." Others felt she avoided them entirely when she circulated throughout the room (e.g., "She did not talk to me") by failing to look at them (e.g., "She never looks at me"), by not listening to them, or by failing to allot them the same time to talk as other children (e.g., "When I asked a question she did not answer it or listen"; "She never gives me the same space"). Several children simply described Ms. Williams as "not nice to me." The children's comments implied that Ms. Williams did not make an effort to notice or connect with them through her expressive behaviors. They said she did not make eye contact or otherwise acknowledge them, that she did not appear to listen to them as they spoke, or that she simply was "not nice" to them compared to her treatment of other children in class.

Many children of color expressed feelings of being overlooked by Ms. Williams especially during whole class instruction. Many felt, for example, that she did not call on them or answer their questions, especially when compared to how deeply and frequently she engaged with other children in the class. According to a Black boy, for example, "I just kept raising my hand and she never called on me." Another of Ms. Williams' students, a Black girl, indicated she had to find a creative solution for not being called on. This child recounted how, on one occasion when she had an especially urgent question, she decided to just let her classmate, a White boy, ask it for her when she realized Ms. Williams would not call on her. "I wish she noticed when my hand was up," she said, "But then I had to have Myles ask her for me."

Some children of color even expressed their belief that Ms. Williams' lack of attention implied she did not like them. When asked, for example, how she thought her teacher felt about her, one child, a Black girl, said, "She wouldn't answer none of my questions and seemed irritated by me." Similarly, although he said Ms. Williams was "nice," a Black male student in her class indicated he nevertheless felt disliked by her. He wrote, "How much do I like her? I

would say from one to ten, I would pick a four because even though she's nice and all, I feel like she ignores me and doesn't like me." While he recognized objectively that Ms. Williams might sometimes be acting in ways that he considered "nice," she failed to do so with *him*. As a result, he felt disconnected from and disliked by her.

  Problem of equal regard. Relatedly, children of color overwhelmingly felt that Ms. Williams did not engage with them around the academic work, and many Black boys especially thought she did not view them as capable. In other words, their comments implied their sense that Ms. Williams did not have sufficient regard for them as learners and thinkers. For example, when asked in their end-of-class surveys how they thought Ms. Williams felt about them, many of the responses of Black boys especially related only to their behavior in class, rather than also pertaining to other things, such as their academic work. One wrote that Ms. Williams felt "pretty good" about him because "I wasn't talking as much." Another wrote, "She felt terrible about me because I talked out of turn." A third Black boy said, "Good probably, because I hadn't gotten yelled at once today," and a fourth wrote, "Good, because I didn't do anything." The children's comments here imply that Ms. Williams engaged with them principally in response to their behavior in class, and that praise or censure from her largely emerged from their ability (or inability) to follow the rules.

  In contrast, when asked what they *wanted* Ms. Williams to notice about them, many children of color, and especially Black boys, wrote not about their behavior, but about their identities as learners and thinkers. For example, one child expressed his wish that Ms. Williams would see "that I am capable," and another said he wanted her to know "I'm a worker." "I wish she would have noticed that I'm a trustworthy and responsible student," said a third, and another child wanted her to finally notice "that I can do this work." Overwhelmingly, Black boys in Ms. Williams' classes wanted her to see them as academically capable and smart—and yet, their comments implied this was not, typically, the case in their interactions with her.

  In general, children's comments here show that Ms. Williams' expressive displays of regard (when they came at all) did not correlate with anything they did academically. Yet, as was evident in Chapter 4, the children ostensibly also observed Ms. Williams deliver praise to *other* children in the class in relation to their academic work, and watched her also encourage other children's ideas through her nonverbal behaviors like affirming gestures, gentle touches, smiles, or eye contact. Her *persona work*, in other words, was inequitable in terms of the quality of

expressive regard she conveyed to children. Taken together, these patterns in the responses of many children of color to Ms. Williams' expressive practice flagged a subtle but significant propensity in Ms. Williams to ignore, overlook, or devalue children of color, and specifically Black children, in her *persona work*.

Situating Ms. Williams within the Broader Study

In this study, children generally spoke very positively of participating teachers and their *persona work*. Further, as I showed in Chapter 4, most teachers appeared largely successful at enacting *persona work* in ways that were productive for orchestrating classroom interaction for most children, at least some of the time. However, it was not always true that children were positively influenced by the expressive behaviors of every teacher. When speaking of teachers in this study or beyond, sometimes children reported feeling distracted or disengaged by teachers' expressive behaviors, such as when teachers spoke in ways that were boring or that otherwise failed to grab children's attention. Sometimes children also worried when teachers appeared too familiar, changeable, or out of control in their *persona work*.

Within this study, however, the especially negative assessments children had for Ms. Williams were unusual. Data emerging from her classrooms showed ways her *persona work* might have been consistently less productive for at least some children in her class. Apparent in observational data of her classes, in interviews with Ms. Williams herself, and in the comments of her students was the fact many Black children especially might have felt devalued or ignored by her *persona work*, and may have experienced less opportunity and success in her classrooms as a result. Compared to that of the other experienced White female teachers in this study, therefore, Ms. Williams' *persona work* stood out as unique in this regard, largely due to the implicit patterns of inequity and privilege she appeared to communicate through her expressive behaviors.

Specifically, it appeared that at least among some children of color her *persona work* failed to help her expressively control, convey regard, or connect with children. In other words, across all three channels of expressive orchestration alluded to in this (and in previous) chapters, Ms. Williams' appeared to falter, at least in her interactions with some children. As this section showed, she especially did not convey academic regard for Black boys through her expressive behaviors in the same way she did for other (White) students, nor did she appear to use her *persona work* to connect with children in the same ways.

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Despite these trends in children's responses to Ms. Williams, it is also important to note that Ms. Williams did in fact also receive many positive reviews from children about her teaching in general and about her *persona work* specifically, and many of those children were also children of color. Therefore, although implicit negative patterns emerged in children's responses to her expressive behaviors some of the time and for some children, at other points her *persona work* seemed highly successful at engaging children and helping her to connect them in productive ways to one another, to the content, and to herself.

The differences in children's assessments of Ms. Williams' *persona work* might be explained in several ways. Perhaps, for example, among some children the different expressive channels through which Ms. Williams enacted *persona work* balanced one another out, resulting in relatively neutral assessments from children. In other words, perhaps among some children, while Ms. Williams failed to expressively connect with them or used her *persona work* to control classroom interaction in ways they found distracting, she simultaneously may have conveyed sufficient regard for their ideas through her expressive behaviors to make said control more tolerable.

It could also be that, in comparison to what some of the children participating in the study—and specifically, some children of color—experienced from *other* teachers they had before or during the time of the study, the differential treatment and expressive inequities they experienced through Ms. Williams' *persona work* were relatively tame. In fact, this might also explain why children did not similarly comment on any expressive patterns of inequity in the *persona work* of the other participating teachers' classrooms, despite teachers' own reports (as described in Chapter 5) of consistently losing expressive control with some children—and primarily with children of color. Children's failure to reference these losses of control does not necessarily mean, in other words, that they were not *felt* by children. Rather, it might simply be that participating teachers' expressive failures and inequities were less egregious than the treatment children sometimes experienced at the hands of other teachers' *persona work*. After all, most children in this study indicated that the participating teachers were some of the best they ever had (including many children in Ms. Williams' classrooms).

In general, data related to Ms. Williams' *persona work* offers a clear example of how the *persona work* of the teachers participating in this study might have functioned differently among different children, such as by encouraging some children's access to the content or the teacher

while limiting access for others. However, this does not mean that the *persona work* of the remaining teachers was also always successful for everyone all the time. It may have been that disruptions in their own expressive control and their failures to connect with all children were, simply, subtler and less consistent.

Conclusion

The 220 children participating in this study had many similar things to say about aspects of teachers' *persona work*. Many talked about the importance in their interactions with teachers of feeling noticed and known as learners. Many also mentioned how important it was for teachers' *persona work* to be equitable rather than seeming to favor some students through different levels and qualities of expressive attention and regard. Further, the children specifically noted ways teachers' humor, style of instructional explanations, and other such expressive characteristics helped them attend to the content more easily, made them feel more connected to the teacher or to the class, maintained their interest, and otherwise helped them stay focused and interested.

These findings show that, in general, teachers' *persona work* was not only highly visible to children, but was also influential on how students engaged with the teacher, the content, the classroom environment, and with one another. In other words, through their *persona work* it seemed that teachers were indeed often able to orchestrate complex classroom interactions for children in ways that were positive and central to students' learning and engagement. However, children did not always feel that teachers' *persona work* was positive. Many children had similar ideas about ways teachers' expressive behaviors might also be distracting, dull, or confusing. Further, a subset of children of color in this study were especially attentive ways teachers' *persona work* could create inequitable opportunities for them to engage in the classroom or with the teacher.

Given children's differential perceptions and experiences of teachers' expressive behaviors, it appeared that while teachers' *persona work* always *impacted* children, teachers' orchestration of classroom interaction through their expressive behaviors was not always positive for all or some students. Instead, it appeared that teachers were most effective at using *persona work* when their expressive behaviors were equitable, consistent and responsive to the unique demands of individual children and instructional contexts. Teachers' *persona work* also seemed

to be most productive (a) when it controlled, managed, and otherwise shaped classroom interactions in ways that equitably and positively helped children focus and learn; (b) when it was a vehicle for communicating teachers' regard for children, and especially their regard for children as thinkers and learners; and (c) when it conveyed that teachers genuinely enjoyed, liked, and otherwise connected with children, again especially as learners. Conversely, when teachers' *persona work* did do these things, teachers' orchestration of classroom interaction appeared to benefit only some children, and sometimes even perpetuated patterns of racism and inequity among children who may have already been marginalized in schools and classrooms due to their race.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation suggests there is a significant area of work in teaching that has gone unnamed and unstudied related to the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice in the classroom. I have termed this the creation and use of a *persona*, or *persona work*. The purpose of this study was to conceptualize the idea of *persona work*, to understand its uses, and to situate it within the broader work of teaching. Specifically, the study drew on observational, interview, and survey data across six classrooms, eight teachers, and 220 children to ask three research questions pertaining to *persona work*:

1. What was the content, form, and structure of teachers' *persona work*?
2. What were the purposes of teachers' *persona work*?
3. How did children think about teachers' *persona work*?

From these research questions, I have argued in this study that teachers' *persona work* wraps around everything they do in the classroom. Further, *persona work* is heavily imbedded in many teaching practices and considerations educational researchers already name and describe in the classroom. I asserted that participating teachers' *persona work* specifically appeared to "orchestrate" the dynamic conditions of classroom interaction between themselves, their students, the content, and the broader classroom environment. I showed in this study how *persona work* sometimes did so in ways that fostered the learning and engagement of all children, but that at other times teachers' *persona work* constrained some or all children's opportunities to learn and engage. In general, this dissertation illustrated the fundamental shaping power of these teachers' *persona work* over classroom interaction, and thus provided evidence for the centrality of *persona work* in teaching more broadly.

This dissertation tells two stories. First, it highlights the visibility and ubiquity of expressive behaviors and other aspects of *persona work* in teachers' instructional and relational practice. In itself, this study has important implications for the field. It underscores the need for teachers to become more aware of their *persona work* and the role it plays in orchestrating

classroom interaction, as well as the need for them to learn to wield it carefully and strategically as a teaching tool. Secondly, this study accentuates the need for education scholars and teacher educators to account for the expressive dimensions of teaching in their research and work.

As the findings from this dissertation show, the fact that teachers' expressive behaviors are ubiquitous and that they serve as a tool for orchestrating classroom interaction is not the only story to tell about *persona work*. By itself, this first story implies that teachers' capacity to create and use *personas* is largely a merely technical part of their work, and that it is thus expressively neutral. But findings from this study showed, on the contrary, that *persona work* is not neutral at all. This dissertation describes how the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice can create spaces where the production and reproduction of inequities might occur in classrooms. Ms. Williams is an example of ways in which teachers' lack of awareness, intention, and control over their *persona work* may be the root of at least some children feeling disconnected or distrustful. The result of such ineffective *persona work* might perpetuate racial inequity and injustice on a larger scale in classrooms and schools.

This chapter considers these ramifications for *persona work*. First, I describe the study's main findings. I then consider implications and contributions of these findings to research and theory in education. Last, I propose future directions for teacher education and educational research given the analysis presented in this study.

Synthesizing Findings

This section summarizes four major findings that emerged from this study's analysis. It then looks across these findings to suggest a framework for thinking about the different ways teachers might use *persona work* to orchestrate classroom interaction.

Main Findings

In this dissertation, I collected data from multiple perspectives to learn about the construct of *persona work* and its purposes. I observed teachers' classrooms, interviewed teachers, and carried out focus groups and administered surveys among students. Overall, I found that teachers' *persona work* was visible to and influential on children. However, I also learned that there were significant differences in the ways teachers and children talked about the purposes and effects of *persona work*, as well as in how different children appeared to experience the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice. Specifically, this study had four main

findings, described below.

First, as observational data from this study showed, while teachers' *persona work* was not always the same, their expressive and communicative moves in the classroom often followed similar patterns or were enacted in similar "bundles" and for comparable reasons. The similarities across multiple expressive dimensions of teachers' practice implied that at least some aspects of teachers' expressive behaviors may have been informed as much by their teaching contexts and purposes as by their personal, idiosyncratic expressive habits and inclinations. Specifically, these data showed that across participating teachers' classrooms, their *persona work* similarly aided them to "orchestrate" conditions of classroom interaction. It helped them to shape, manage, coordinate, and control relationships between themselves, their students, the content, and the broader classroom interaction in diverse ways, ostensibly to maximize the possibility all children would be able to learn and engage in productive ways.

A second finding of this study related to how the teachers themselves appeared to believe *persona work* helped orchestrate interactions in the classroom—namely, through the expressive channel of "control." Teachers described how they used *persona work* to manage and shape the intellectual and physical environment of the classroom in ways that were oriented less toward maximizing the likelihood *all* children would learn and engage in class, and aimed more toward ensuring that children learned and engaged in the ways teachers desired and prescribed. For example, teachers spoke of directing children's attention, manipulating children's interest in the content, or speaking and moving in certain ways. Teachers described such methods of expressive control as intended to make children feel more connected to the teacher and to class, and thus to convince children to participate and learn.

The children too often saw teachers' *persona work* through the lens of control, and sometimes even viewed this a good thing in terms of helping them sustain their interest and focus. Yet another finding showed that children's desire to submit to teachers' control was predicated on the extent to which students also felt that their teachers communicated regard and inspired connection through their *persona work*, especially in relation to children's role as learners. In the case of Ms. Williams, for example, the control she exerted felt inequitable for some children—especially for Black boys—and appeared largely devoid of the additional expressive channels of connection or regard. Therefore, the experience this subset of children had of Ms. Williams' *persona work* was much less positive than that of their peers. They also

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had fewer substantive opportunities to interact with the content, with one another, or with the teacher herself as a result.

In a final major finding, it seemed that participating teachers (including Ms. Williams) were typically unaware of the differential effects their *persona work* sometimes had on children. For example, none of these teachers explicitly connected their descriptions of *losing* expressive control over their *persona work*—and thus, in their minds, over classroom interaction more broadly—with the fact that those losses in control almost exclusively involved Black children. Rather, they appeared to entertain the belief—alluded to at the start of this chapter—that their *persona work* was expressively neutral. By failing to see or acknowledge inequitable or uneven patterns in their *persona work*, the teachers created opportunities for racism and injustice to emerge through their expressive behaviors and patterns—especially, in the case of this study, in their interactions with children of color.

Persona Work and Multiple Expressive Channels

At first, it may seem that the work of creating and using a *persona* in teaching is one of the most instinctive, straightforward tasks that teachers face. What does it require other than simply "being oneself," and talking or moving in ways that are habitual or instinctive? Some might say that surely a "love of children" is sufficient, and the rest will follow. Yet, these data point to something very different. They imply that even with extensive teaching experience and, in many cases, a genuine liking for their students, these teachers still had much to learn about using *persona work* in ways that were productive for all. Especially in cases when children were already positioned by their teacher as experiencing challenges, teachers' problematic or uneven *persona work* sometimes perpetuated even more serious patterns of inequity in classrooms. When taken together, what do these findings mean for what teachers can and should do when creating and using *personas* in classrooms? What considerations emerge from these findings that might provide a framework for guiding this work? Specifically, how might teachers avoid perpetuating inequities, whether small or large, in their *persona work*?

When the participating teachers described using *persona work* in this study, they primarily talked about doing so through the expressive channel of "control." In contrast, children indicated their desire for teachers to also expressively engage with them in ways that communicated care and regard. I draw on these findings to argue that the expressive channels of connection, control, and regard may always need to be present in teachers' *persona work* in some

capacity, or at least might need to intersect with and balance one another in ways that maximize the likelihood children will be able to learn and engage—and will want to do so. As Chapter 6 showed, children were more likely to accede to teachers' control when they also felt their teachers valued them and respected them as learners. Similarly, children also indicated that sometimes teachers' care or regard was not enough if the teacher or the class was "out of control." *Persona work*, therefore, may require some combination of all three expressive channels—and potentially others beyond what were identified in this study—to result in "productive" interactional conditions for all learners. For an illustration of this, see Figure 7.1 below.
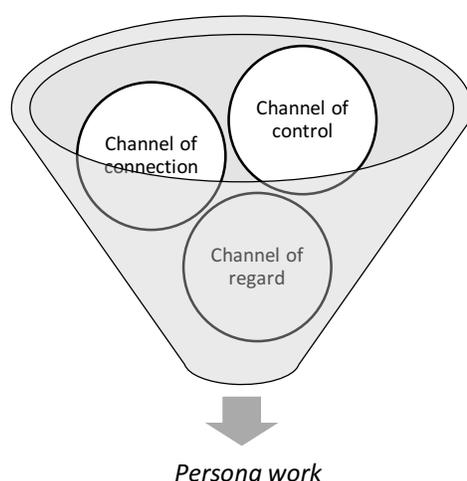
Persona work

Figure 7.1. *Intersecting channels of persona work*.

I also assert that the *nature* of these expressive channels and the ways in which they intersect in teachers' *persona work* might be very different. Each of these expressive channels— connection, control, and regard—falls on a continuum in terms of how it might be enacted through teachers' *persona work*. Further, depending on the nature of each expressive channel (and how they work together), teachers' orchestration of classroom interaction might look very different, and might be more or less productive for some or all children.

For example, when enacting the expressive channel of "control," teachers might expressively engage in ways that appear autocratic or inequitable. On the other hand, teachers might also exert control through their *persona work* predictably, logically, and responsively in a way that correlates with children's own needs and understandings. In another example, teachers

might control conditions of classroom interaction in ways that actually help at least some children focus or learn, such as by creating "safe" spaces in the classroom or by minimizing distractions so students can concentrate. Teachers might also use *persona work* to control classroom interaction in ways that fall somewhere in the middle, such as by actively shaping only some interactional conditions. Figure 7.2 illustrates this continuum in how teachers might potentially enact the expressive channel of "control" in their *persona work*.

| Potentially worse for children | Autocratic, unpredictable and/or inequitable control; nonexistent control | Control over only some interactional conditions; inconsistent control | Equitable, predictable, just and/or responsive conrol | Potentially better for children |
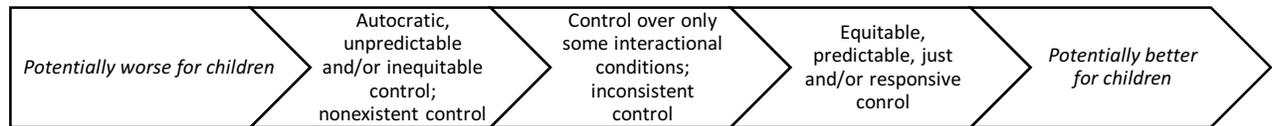
Figure 7.2. *Continuum of the expressive channel of "control."*

Similarly, there are multiple ways "regard" and "connection" might appear in teachers' *persona work*, some of which seemed to be better received than others by students and thus more productive. On the low end of the continuum, teachers might use *persona work* in a way that conveys a *lack* of regard or care for some or all children. When this occurred in this study, children did not respond positively. Teachers also might communicate their care and regard through *persona work* only some or the time, or in some ways and not others. For example, while teachers might use their expressive behaviors to connect with children personally, their *persona work* might ignore children's academic performance. In the most positive realization of *persona work*, teachers might consistently convey through their *persona work* their regard and care for children, and they might do so in ways that feel equitable and comprehensive for children. When this occurs, children may be more likely to respond positively to teachers' *persona work*. For an overview of this continuum, see Figure 7.3.

| Potentially worse for children | Minimal or inequitable connection and/or regard | Incomplete or inconsistent connection and/or regard | Strong, equitable or comprehensive connection and/or regard | Potentially better for children |
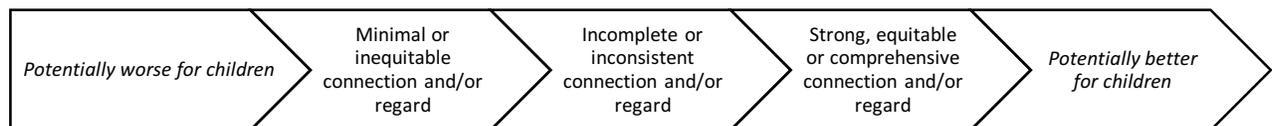
Figure 7.3. *Continuum of the expressive channels of "connection" and "regard."*

Among different children or across different interactional contexts, it may be that what counts as "productive" *persona work* fluctuates across these different channels of expressive

orchestration. In some moments, it may be necessary for teachers to be more controlling in their expressive behaviors than others, whereas at other times children might respond best when teachers relinquish control almost entirely, and instead simply use their expressive behaviors to communicate high levels of regard for children's ideas. It might also be that even when teachers convey no connection, no regard, or no control through their *persona work*, the remaining expressive channels will make up for this—especially in the case of regard and connection.

In general, I argue that *persona work* that "productively" orchestrates classroom interaction for all children may need to be dynamic and flexible across these expressive channels, as well as highly responsive to children's own reactions and expressive priorities. However, I also assert there are likely some exceptions to this, and that *persona work* is not always entirely relative given the instructional and relational context. First, as findings from this study showed, when teachers behave in ways that are consistently inequitable across any of these three expressive channels, their *persona work* is likely to be less effective for orchestrating classroom interaction for at least some children. Second, findings also pointed to the fact that especially in cases where teachers' *persona work* is consistently dominated by the expressive channel of "control," children might be less likely to respond positively to it.

Extending Research and Theory

In this study, I have argued that *persona work* overlaps with many other aspects of teaching that scholars have long studied (e.g., instructional explanations, praise, and feedback), as well as potentially having close ties with teachers' and children's identities. This section revisits these ideas by considering the implications of *persona work* for them. Specifically, I consider what *persona work* means for how the field names and conceptualizes different domains of teaching, as well as what these findings about *persona work* imply about the relationship between teachers' and students' intersectional identities and how expressive behaviors are used and interpreted in the classroom.

Intersections Between *Persona Work* and Other Domains of Teaching and Research

At different points in this study, I have pointed out the overlap between what I am calling *persona work* and other named and well-researched dimensions of teaching. For example, I have drawn attention to intersections between the expressive dimensions of teachers' work and differential attention in the classroom, to teacher feedback and praise, and to core practices in

subject matter instruction (e.g., giving explanations). Given the close relationship between *persona work* and other aspects of teaching, in fact, my work might conceivably be situated beside a growing line of research related to naming and describing core practices central to teaching work (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Ball & Forzani, 2009; Forzani, 2014; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Grossman & McDonald, 2008; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013; Windschitl, Thompson, Braaten, & Stroupe, 2012).

Yet, I argue that *persona work* is not in itself a single "instructional practice" in teaching, nor is it merely an extension of other, already-familiar teaching practices. Rather, it is both—and more than both—as it undergirds all teaching work. For example, the uneven feedback patterns described in Chapters 4 and 6 in Ms. Williams' *persona work* might be explained, at least partially, by the literature on feedback bias (e.g., Downey & Pribesh, 2004; Irvine, 1990; Jordan Irvine, 1985; Yeager et al., 2014). However, a key ingredient influencing children's interpretation of her feedback was also Ms. Williams' *persona work*. To communicate her feedback, Ms. Williams also needed to draw on expressive behaviors and patterns, and did so in ways that fundamentally affected the nature of that feedback (e.g., by speaking in a rushed and dismissive manner). Similarly, in Chapter 6 children described their preferences for teachers who could give cogent and compelling instructional explanations. Part of teachers' capacity to do so might be explained by subject-specific literature that describes more or less effective ways to explain and model in English language arts (e.g., Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1988; Howey & Grossman, 1989). Again, however, the expressive dimensions of teachers' explanations also fundamentally influenced how and what they communicated with children, and appeared to lead children to experience teachers' instruction very differently.

I am not arguing that teachers' verbal and nonverbal expressive behaviors are more critical than other teaching considerations or practices. For example, teachers' *persona work* alone could not have made up for their lack of knowledge of how to give an instructional explanation in ELA. Rather, I assert here that it is through *persona work* that teachers give these other domains of teaching texture and life. Through *persona work,* all teaching is inhabited and acted out. Thus, while many of these and other aspects of teaching may justly and accurately be referred to by other names—such as differential treatment, giving feedback, or giving an instructional explanation—they are also necessarily and simultaneously aspects of teachers' *persona work*.

This analysis has powerful implications for how the education field parses and studies these practices, as well as for how they are taught to novices. As I have argued in this dissertation, the expressive dimensions of teachers' work have, until now, largely been ignored by the field and treated as neutral. Yet, teachers' creation and use of *personas* is not only interwoven with, but also animates, all other aspects of teaching. Therefore, to fully conceptualize, study, and teach different domains of instructional work, researchers and teacher educators should also consider the expressive dimensions of these teaching domains, as well as how these expressive dimensions might be differentially experienced by children.

Intersections between *Persona Work* and Identity

One reason I chose the term *persona work* to describe the expressive dimensions of teachers' practice was due to its close ties to the term "person." In fact, a premise of this study was that teachers' interactional identities and experiences would be important for how they created and used *personas* in the classroom. Specifically, I was interested in how White female middle class teachers engaged expressively with children from many different races and social groups, and especially in how their *persona work* functioned among children whose identities and experiences were very different from the teachers' own. I speculated that such differences might impact the ways in which teachers used *persona work* among different students, as well as affect how children would experience and interpret it.

This dissertation showed that there were indeed differential expressive patterns that emerged in teachers' *persona work* depending on the identity of the students with whom they interacted. Further, many of the more egregious concerns children had about teachers' expressive behaviors and patterns entailed some amount of inequity or differential treatment among different groups of students. I posed the following questions: To what extent were the problems in the *persona work* of the teachers described here directly a result of their intersectional identities as White middle class women? Would other teachers who identified differently show similar or different expressive patterns when using *persona work* among diverse (or monocultural) batches of children? This section explores these questions.

Given the dense, intersectional nature of identity, it is hard to argue that specific identity characteristics (e.g., race, class) correlate directly to clear expressive behaviors or patterns. However, do I suggest that using *persona work* in ways that are equitable and productive for all children—and especially for children of color—may be particularly challenging for many White

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teachers. As I argued at the start of this study, there is a proven record of inequitable and harmful treatment of children of color among some White teachers. For example, teachers' deficit perspectives and lack of cultural competence have led them to constrain or denigrate the learning, engagement, and communication practices of children of color, and Black children in particular. Likewise, this study highlighted how some (White) teachers' *persona work* among children of color similarly perpetuated overt—as well as subtle—patterns of racism and inequity.

As this study also showed, the White teachers participating in this study were also largely unaware of inequitable patterns in their *persona work* in their overall teaching practice. They also appeared not to notice children's differential responses to their uneven expressive behaviors, and instead seemed to assume their *persona work* was equally beneficial for all. As a result, I have argued that these teachers viewed their expressive behaviors—habitual or performed, unconscious or intentional—as expressively neutral. In so doing, there was an implicit sense of power and privilege many of these teachers appeared to bring to their *persona work*, characterized by the assumption that it ought to work equally well for everyone and that, when it failed to do so, it was the largely fault of the students rather than of the teachers themselves. In this sense, teachers' identities, perspectives, and experiences were indeed a contributing factor in terms of what they did—and did not—notice about their *persona work*.

This analysis highlights the need to further consider important intersections between teachers' dispositions, orientations to children, and their *persona work*. For example, there is a growing body of research related to the relationship between teachers' dispositions and the role of equity in their instructional and relational practice (Alsup & Miller, 2014; Carroll, 2005; Diez, 2006; Edwards, 2011). However, I also argue for the importance of considering specifically the ways teachers' personal biases and dispositions show up in the expressive dimensions of their work. I will argue that teachers may need to become aware not only of what they do expressively, but also of how their expressive behaviors may be differentially interpreted by children.

I also argue, however, that efforts to help teachers master *persona work* and interrogate the intersections between personal biases and the expressive dimensions of their practice should relate to all teachers and classrooms, and not be confined to White teachers alone. Knowing how to use *persona work* responsively and sensitively across different expressive channels is a problem of teaching more broadly. This is because *persona work* emerges from the human nature

of the work and from teachers' continual charge to orchestrate dynamic conditions of classroom interaction. In fact, to say that *persona work* is exclusively a problem for White teachers in cross-cultural settings dangerously implies that expressive interactions with children of color may require some "special" understanding or skill. The problem, however, rests not with the children but rather with teaching itself, given the close relationship between the expressive dimensions of teachers' work and their instructional and relational practice. *Persona work* is not simply a challenge for some teachers and some students, although certainly some teachers may need to give it more attention than others. Rather, it is a core challenge for any teacher, no matter where one works, or with whom.

Future Directions for Teacher Education and Research

Given the implications described above, this chapter ends by considering future directions. First, it articulates specific ways teacher education programs can train teachers to create and use *personas* productively. Next, this section highlights several critical steps needed in educational research to further illuminate the construct of *persona work* and its implications for different teachers, classrooms and children.

Directions for Teacher Education

While it may be true that teachers will eventually develop some competency in *persona work* with more teaching experience, such learning takes time. Further, as this study showed, there is no guarantee that teachers who learn to be more aware of or intentional in their expressive behaviors will also learn to do so in ways that are productive and effective for all children. Becoming more skilled at recognizing and manipulating expressive behaviors over the course of one's career, for example, does not necessarily make one more adept at doing so in ways that are not racist.

Rather, given the central role *persona work* plays in teachers' instructional and relational work, it is simply too risky to assume that new teachers will eventually use expressive behaviors in ways that are consistently just and responsive for all children. It is important, therefore, that teacher education programs heed the charge of ensuring novices have ample opportunity to identify, rehearse, and reflect on different ways of using expressive behaviors, and that they also have opportunities to understand the effects of their expressive behaviors on children.

Using expressive behaviors in *persona work* is simultaneously the most *natural* and the *unnatural* act. On one hand, such work requires that teachers make use of highly personal, instinctive aspects of *self,* such as voice, movement, or facial expression. Individuals are accustomed to leveraging such expressive resources as part of nearly every human interaction, and thus they typically do so in ways that are habitual, instinctive, and unconscious. Yet when engaging in *persona work,* teachers might also have to use expressive behaviors in ways and combinations that feel to them "unnatural" (Ball & Forzani, 2009). As was evident in this study, productive uses of *persona work* might require teachers to suppress instinctive emotions or reactions that might be interpreted negatively by children.

In another example, successful *persona work* might mean that teachers must speak, move, or otherwise use expressive behaviors in ways that convey an impression of confidence or excitement, even when they do not feel that way. To leverage elements of *self* strategically and in service of relational and instructional goals thus requires that teachers shift their orientation from their *own* emotions, understandings, and learning styles and instead act based on *others'* understandings—namely, those of their students. It entails what Ball and Forzani described as "not presuming shared identity," but instead "seeking to learn others' experiences and perspectives" (Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 500).

It may be that for many novice (and experienced) teachers, learning to intentionally use *persona work* in these ways might feel artificial and uncomfortable, especially when the expressive behaviors they are trying to learn run counter to habit or instinct. It could also be that certain formations of *persona* are simply more expressively difficult than others for teachers to enact or control depending on the expressive resources on which they are able to draw. In the following sections, I discuss ideas for how to meet this charge and train teachers to do this work in ways that are expressively flexible, responsive to students and teaching contexts, and productive for all children.

Teach novices to become aware of what their *personas* look like and entail. Novices need opportunities to develop an understanding of what they look like when engaging with children through *persona work*. In many teacher education programs, teachers have ample opportunity to talk about their beliefs about children and their philosophies of teaching, to learn the appropriate "methods" for subject matter instruction, and to reflect on the kind of teachers

they want to be. Yet even with the increase in practice-based teacher education programs, there are few opportunities for novices to observe and rehearse expressive behaviors.

To help facilitate awareness among novice teachers of the expressive dimensions of their work, teacher education programs can provide novices with multiple opportunities to watch and analyze examples of their own and one another's teaching, such as through the use of video. By doing so, new teachers may begin to identify expressive patterns in their own *persona work* and thus be better positioned to alter and manipulate expressive behaviors. Relatedly, the use of video can help novices understand that the ways they believe themselves to be acting expressively among children (e.g., nice, mean) might not translate to their actual expressive behaviors.

Teach novices to be aware of and responsive to children's interpretation of their *persona work*. It is important that teacher education programs also guide novice teachers in understanding how their *personas* are interpreted by their students and how those interpretations might vary. Just as it is possible that teachers will have an underdeveloped sense of what they actually look like when teaching, so too might they misunderstand how students see and respond to the ways they use expressive behaviors and their purposes for doing so

Teaching novices to recognize children's perceptions of their *persona work*, as well as to adapt their expressive behaviors productively in light of children's responses is, however, in itself a weighty charge that intersects with many different aspects of teacher education work. For example, it may entail helping novices shift their own dispositions and unearthing biases and prejudices about children. This is, in fact, what many teacher education institutions are already doing. Novices also need to understand how their biases and dispositions translate to their *persona work*, both positively and negatively. In other words, as described above, teacher education programs need to provide novices with opportunities to see and reflect on their own expressive practice. The goal of such training would be to help teachers anticipate and accommodate for the potentially very different responses children might have to their *persona work*.

Additionally, I suggest that teacher education programs allow novices to gain experience with many different children and classrooms, both to help them build a schema for anticipating students' response to variations in their *personas*, and to help them understand how particular ways of leveraging aspects of *self* might be interpreted and understood by learners. Relatedly, it

may be useful to have novice teachers interview children about how they are understanding their own (or others') *persona work*. Doing so would help novices become aware of the very different potential expressive channels teachers might use when engaging in *persona work* and their differential effects on children.

      Help novices identify their personal "repertoire" of expressive behaviors. Teacher education must also help teachers understand the scope of expressive behaviors they might conceivably use and manipulate in their *persona work*. This entails not simply naming the general behavioral vocabularies that might constitute *persona work* (such as the list presented in Chapter 4, Table 4.2), but also helping teachers to identify expressive behaviors that are expressively *actionable* in terms of their own unique expressive resources and capabilities. It means helping novices identify the potential "repertoire" of *self* they have at their disposal to do this work. Such training entails transitioning teachers from recognizing a common vocabulary of expressive behaviors on which they might draw, as well as *personalizing* that expressive vocabulary.

      To do this, extensive work and training would be required on several fronts. First, teacher education programs would need to provide novices with opportunities to observe—and then to *rehearse*—different enactments of expressive behaviors. Such rehearsal would do several things. It would help broaden novices' ideas about and experiences with what, conceivably, is expressively possible for them. It may be, for example, that what initially feels expressively "unnatural" (Ball & Forzani, 2009) for them will become familiar and second-nature over time. Repeated opportunities to rehearse different formations of *persona work* would help new teachers internalize and become accustomed to even those expressive behaviors that initially felt counter-intuitive or awkward. The result, potentially, would be that each novice develops a homegrown, personalized expressive repertoire that has the potential to orchestrate classroom interaction responsively, flexibly, and productively in many different contexts and among many different children. This is a weighty challenge, but nevertheless doable.

      It may also be important for teacher education programs to convince novices to establish and broaden their expressive repertoire in other ways. For example, as added motivation for doing this work, novices may also need to learn about the potentially dire consequences that might result when they fail to use *persona work* flexibly, productively or equitably. For example, they may need concrete illustrations of how teachers can perpetuate injustice and harm through

their *persona work* unintentionally, simply because they were acting expressively out of habit or instinct. Novice teachers may be inclined, in such cases, to push past their own feelings of discomfort when learning to enact *persona work* in order to prevent the potentially deeper discomfort which their unthinking expressive behaviors might cause for some (or all) students.

Directions for Future Research

The idea that *persona work* may be central to the larger work of teaching is new in the research on teaching and teacher education. Therefore, much research still needs to be done to sufficiently develop and understand the construct of *persona work*. Many important questions linger about this domain of practice and its relationship to different instructional contexts and purposes. However, this dissertation provides a useful starting point for these efforts. I describe potential directions for future research below.

First, as a field we need to continue to name and describe the ways teachers' *persona work* might be enacted across multiple settings, teachers, subject matter specializations, and student identities. Likewise, we need to do more to investigate the extent to which teachers' *persona work* does and does not vary in light of their different instructional purposes and teaching settings. In this study, for example, I looked solely at English language arts and social studies instruction in middle school classrooms. How might a shift in subject matter or grade level impact teachers' *persona work*? Further, what are the specific expressive considerations, if any, within each subject-specific core practice in different content areas?

Next, this dissertation draws on data that reflects instruction from only six teachers, and all are White, female, and middle class. Constraining the sources of data in this way allowed for important considerations about the relationship between teachers' *persona work* and shared aspects of their personal identities. However, there is also a critical need to explore *persona work* among different populations of teachers in order to continue to parse the relationship between teachers' identities and their expressive behaviors.

Relatedly, additional research is also necessary among different populations of children in terms of how they experience and interpret teachers' *persona work*. As this study showed, in some cases teachers used *persona work* in ways that were inequitable or uneven among different groups of children, and some children, in turn, had different responses to teachers' *persona work* as a result. More research is necessary to verify and further develop these findings. The field also needs to investigate very different classroom contexts. For example, in addition to exploring the

construct of *persona work* inside racially diverse, heterogeneous classrooms, it would also be useful to describe how it is used and interpreted among student populations that are largely racially, culturally, and socioeconomically homogenous. Such investigations will deepen the field's understanding of the ways additional expressive channels might be used (e.g., equitably or not) in *persona work* to orchestrate classroom interaction, as well as shed light on how different groups of children might interpret those expressive channels differently.

An additional body of research is also needed to look more closely at the connection between *persona work* and different measures of student learning and engagement. This study conceptualized, on a broad level, the relationship between teachers' *persona work* and their orchestration of classroom interaction, and thus did not look closely at specific learning or engagement indicators. For example, it relied on children's reports of the effects of *persona work* on their understanding and learning rather than also considering children's academic work. Similarly, it would be useful to conduct additional studies that look at different ways children appeared to be outwardly engaged in response to teachers' *persona work*, and the degree to which this varies depending on what teachers do. Last, it would be interesting to look primarily at the *persona work* of young people themselves, such as by describing it, exploring its purposes, and exploring the differential ways teachers appear to interpret and understand it.

Given the amount of research that needs to be done in relation to the construct of *persona work*, it is vital that researchers come together around a common program and shared language to address these topics. However, this research effort will not be fruitful unless, as a field, we also move the construct of *persona work* to the foreground of our research agenda and give it the attention it merits. Rather than continuing to view it as a tacit, instinctive skill that is best learned through experience alone, I propose that the field treat it as something that needs to be explicitly described, researched, and taught to novices.

As this dissertation has argued, teachers' *persona work* plays a fundamental role in determining the extent to which teachers can instruct and engage all children positively and productively. *Persona work* may also fundamentally shape children's own engagement and learning in classrooms, as well as influence teachers' ability to create classroom environments that are responsive, joyful, and inclusive. Without collectively acknowledging as a field that *persona work* is critical for facilitating productive relationships in the classroom between teachers, students, and the subject matter, teachers will not learn to manage this area of work in

productive ways. Relatedly, without developing a common language and shared conceptualization around what it means to create and use *personas*, the field will continue to relegate teachers' mastery of this domain of interpersonal practice to chance or to experience alone. In so doing, it will continue to place an increasing majority of our nation's learners dangerously at risk.

Sample Teacher Interview Questions

Sample Questions for Opening and Closing Interviews

- Would you say you have a typical manner or personal style when you teach? If so, how would you describe it?
  - *(If teacher does not mention any of the hypothesized expressive resources)* You did mention aspects of your voice (etc.) – are you explicitly trying to use this in how you relate to your students or how you try to come across to them? If so, could you give me some examples? How important do you think this is, and why or why not?
  - Do you find yourself altering your outward manner / personal style when you teach? If so, why?
  - How much do you think about your outward manner / personal style when you are teaching, if at all? What do you think about (if applicable)?
  - Is your manner / personal style when you teach similar / different to other outward manners you adopt in different parts in your life? If so, in what way?
- How do you want your students to view you? What sort of teacher do you imagine yourself to be?
  - Are there things you are particularly good at when working with different groups of students? Things you are still working on?
  - Are there any specific relationships you have with children that stand out to you?
- Are there things you would say you are particularly good at instructionally? How about things you would say you are still working on?
- How much do you think about things like race, class, gender, and so on when you teach?
  - Do you think your identity as a White middle class female is significant in your teaching? How do you think students see you, based on your identity?
  - Do you think there is anything significant related to children's own identities?

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Sample "Check In" Questions

- Why did you _____ during your lesson? [Might have to do with ways of leveraging expressive resources or the teacher's instructional or relational decision-making.]

- How would you describe your manner / personal style during this lesson? Is there anything you were especially thinking about or trying to do?

- Is there anything you did during today's lesson in your manner / personal style that strikes you as different from how you might act in other contexts?

- Was there anything about what you taught today that might have affected your manner / personal style or mode of interacting with your students?

- Was there anything going on today in your interpersonal relationships with students or their relationships with one another that might have affected your manner / personal style or mode of interacting with students?

- Is there anything you are especially proud of from today's lesson? Is there anything you are worried about?

Sample Questions for Video Recall Sessions

- Can you tell me how you felt at this point?

- How did you want the students to perceive you here?

- What about your behavior at this point that surprises you? What do you notice about your style/manner at this point?

- What were your thoughts when doing this activity?

- What were you thinking when you decided to do this?

- Why did you decide to do that? Were there any other thoughts going through your mind?

- What were you noticing/hearing at this point?

Sample End-Of-Class Survey (v. 3—mid-data collection)

1. In class today….

When was your teacher the most interesting?

_____

When was your teacher the most boring?

_____

2. Did your teacher notice you today?

_____

If so, how do you know?

_____

What did she notice?

_____

3. What is something your teacher did NOT notice about you that you wish she had?

_____

_____

4. On a scale of 1 to 4, how do you think your teacher was feeling today you? *(Circle one)*

1	2	3	4
Bad/annoyed/frustrated	So-so	Okay? Not sure?	Great!

Why? _____

4. What is something else you wish I'd asked you today about your teacher?

Your question: _____

Your answer: _____

APPENDIX C

Sample focus group questions

General Questions

- How would you describe your teacher to a kid who has never been in your classroom before? Think about how your teacher moves, talks, and so on.

- What are some things your teacher does that make you feel good and/or help you learn?

- Are there things your teacher does that sometimes are distracting?

- Does your teacher help you feel smart / safe / confident / and other good things? What does she do to help you feel this way?

- Do you feel your teacher notices and pays attention to you when she teaches? What does she do to help you feel this way?

    (*If the students say no, ask:* What makes you think your teacher is not noticing you? *Or if students say they are not sure, ask:* Why are you not sure? What makes you feel not sure about whether your teacher notices you?)

- How would you compare your teacher to other teachers you have had? What is similar or different? Do you think your teacher is similar / different from you?

- Is there anything about your teacher that makes your mad? Is your teacher fair?

- Do you think it is important that your teacher is White / female? Does this mean anything?

Sample Questions Related to Video Clips of Teachers:

- Can you tell me how you felt at this point?

- In this part, how would you compare your teacher's movement / voice / etc. to other teachers you have? What did your teacher do with her voice / body language / etc. here that was distracting or that helped you focus?

- What were you noticing/hearing at this point? What thoughts were going through your mind?

APPENDIX D

Sample Video Observation Tool (v. 1)

Classroom code: Video code:	*Expressive work* (**Examples and characteristics**)		
	- Gesture - Movement - Posture - Proximity, touch - Tone, volume - Body orientation - Gaze	- Rhythm of speech - Praise - Self-disclosure - Humor - Indirectness	- Turn-taking - Content of "personal" exchange - Calling on kids - Other expressive patterns
Interval: What is happening?	**Characterization of expressive work** *(Dominant behaviors or patterns? Common combinations? Interesting variations? How does it change across activities?)*		
Interval: What is happening?	**Characterization of expressive work** *(Dominant behaviors or patterns? Common combinations? Interesting variations? How does it change across activities?)*		
Interval: What is happening?	**Characterization of expressive work** *(Dominant behaviors or patterns? Common combinations? Interesting variations? How does it change across activities?)*		

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