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Emotional rules in two history classrooms

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A B S T R A C T

Drawing on feminist and sociocultural theories of emotion that focus on the social, political, and dynamic nature of emotions in history teachers' pedagogical decision-making, this article presents findings from the analysis of interviews with two white teachers on the role of emotions in their teaching of history in comprehensive, urban high schools. While the teachers perceived that students' emotional connection to historical content was a necessary step in learning history, each teacher negotiated different emotional rules in their classrooms, creating unique learning experiences for their students. This study demonstrates the significance of emotions in history teaching, providing examples of the complexity of how teachers navigate dominant discourses about students and education and their own personal goals when it comes to teaching about the past.

1. Emotional Rules in Two History Classrooms

Classrooms are unique public spaces. They are structured and controlled environments where young people are required to spend their time engaged in regulated social and academic tasks. As Jackson (1990) described, the institutional demands of being in a classroom, the evaluative nature of the shared social space, and the power dynamics between teachers and students make classrooms distinct from other public and private spaces. In classrooms, history teachers become gatekeepers of the curriculum (Klein, 2017; Thornton, 1991) and, to some extent, to the emotional contours of the classroom environment (Zembylas et al., 2014). Classrooms are emotional spaces (Garrett & Alvey, 2021; Zembylas, 2006) where teachers work to manage complex emotional dynamics (Geller, 2020; Sheppard & Levy, 2019). Teaching history is often simultaneously tied to and distanced from emotion. For example, the paradoxical expectations regarding the emotional nature of history education can be seen in current legislation across the United States that aims to limit the uncomfortable emotions students encounter when studying America's racial history, while also fostering patriotism, a loving feeling toward the nation (Serwer, 2021).

While history education can be positioned as objective and knowable (VanSledright, 2008), research also documents the emotional nature of teaching and learning history in schools (Barton and McCully, 2010; Errázuriz, 2021; Goldberg, 2017b; Miles, 2019; Zembylas, 2016). Emotions, whether acknowledged or not, are present, significant, and influential for students and teachers alike. They are simultaneously communal and personal, visible and unseen, and constitutive of and responsive to curriculum and pedagogy. Zembylas (2002) argued that within classrooms, teachers' work is governed by *emotional rules* constructed through institutional arrangements as well as discourses about who teachers are and what they should do.

Aiming to further explore the role of emotions in history education, this research is framed by feminist and sociocultural theories that focus on the social, political, and dynamic nature of emotions. Drawing on Zembylas (2005) and Thein et al.'s (2015) research, I conceptualize teachers' emotional rules as reflective and constitutive of both larger sociocultural discourses and personal goals, whose meanings are negotiated in specific classroom contexts. This paper reports the findings from an analysis of two white teachers' reflections on the role of emotions in how they taught history in large, comprehensive, urban high school classrooms populated primarily

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by Black and Latinx students. The questions guiding this research were::

- What emotional rules were evident in the history teachers' descriptions of their teaching?
- How did these emotional rules mediate their teaching of history?

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2 1. What are emotions?

Emotions are complex and difficult to study; their genesis and effects span the depths of our internal lives to the expanses of our social and cultural worlds. Drawing on Ahmed's (2004) theorization, I approach emotions as cultural practices that are relational, moving us toward and away from each other and the world around us. Drawing on Zembylas' (2007) performative and interactionist conception of emotions, I view emotions as not just products of individual minds or social contexts, but as part of the process through which the physiological and the social are produced and blurred. Emotions do not exist fully in or outside of individuals; rather, they are produced and move between and among people and objects. Centering how emotions exist in relationship, movement, and action, does not disavow the embodied nature of emotions. Rather, it clarifies how bodies and emotions are simultaneously located in sociopolitical contexts that therefore cannot be natural or neutral (Miccichie, 2007). The embodiment of emotions is shaped by social interaction (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990).

This way of theorizing emotions as both personal and social, as embodied and moving between bodies, disrupts many of the binaries that have shaped common ideas about emotions (Boler, 1999). The theorization of emotions as feminine, personal, ungovernable, and somehow in opposition to an imagined masculine realm of reason and control, has been disrupted by an increased understanding of the emotional lives of all genders (Ahmed, 2004; Boler, 1999). Furthermore, there is growing evidence of how reason and emotion are inseparable, working in tandem as people think about, respond to, and make sense of the world (Miccichie, 2007). "Focusing on emotions as mediated rather than immediate reminds us that knowledge cannot be separated from the bodily world of feeling and sensation" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 171). What people know, and how they learn, is connected to how they feel.

Central to a sociocultural theorization of emotions is an understanding of the interconnection of emotions and discourse (Abu--Lughod & Lutz, 1990; Boler, 1999). Zembylas (2005) argued "emotion functions as a discursive practice in which emotional expression is *productive*—that is to say, it makes individuals into socially and culturally specific persons engaged in complex webs of power relations" (original emphasis, p. 937). Emotions, like language, are simultaneously reflective and constitutive of the social world we live in, of identities, meanings, and relationships.

Emotions draw us toward each other, objects, and ideas—just as they repel us from other ideas, objects and people (Ahmed, 2004). Yet this sense of movement does not imply emotions are free flowing and individual. On the contrary, emotions are sites of social control (Boler, 1999). As emotions move us and (re)produce meaning in situated contexts, we begin to recognize that there are sociocultural expectations, or rules, around what emotions mean and how they should (or should not) be expressed.

2.2. Emotional rules

Much like Hochschild's (1979) "feeling rules," emotional rules are social guidelines for how people relate to each other and interpret information in specific contexts. These rules can be explicit or implicit, official or unofficial, as they regulate and guide emotional expression in social situations (Zembylas et al., 2014). Emotional rules set the expectations for behavior and interaction reflective of larger cultural beliefs and relations of power. Emotional rules inform and guide not only behavior but also where people direct their attention (Boler, 1999). For example, when we hear of a police shooting, do we express outrage and protest against violent, systemic racism inherent in the social justice system? Or do we sympathize with the police officer and become angry at the riots and protesters?

Emotional rules are informed by and communicate larger ideological and cultural expectations, yet are enacted in personal interactions, in local spaces such as schools and classrooms (Hochschild, 1979; Thein et al., 2015). Within the classroom, emotional rules are embedded in the interactions between teachers and students. Teachers and students are in a continual process of exchange of information, beliefs, and emotions as they imagine, enact, and negotiate their identities and sense of belonging (Worsham, 1998). "[T]eacher and students are always caught up in the politics of emotions; emotions are (de)legitimized not only on the basis of social relations in the classroom, but also in the context of larger historical narratives and power relations" (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011, p. 1010). This study is an examination of how teachers enact, produce, resist, or redirect emotional rules related to learning history through their pedagogical decisions.

2.3. Emotions and social studies education

The significance of emotions in social studies and history educational research has been growing (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011; Errázuriz, 2021; Garrett & Alvey, 2021; Keegan, 2019; Miles, 2019; Zembylas, 2016; Zembylas et al., 2014). While interest in emotional topics and issues in social education has persisted over time, attention to the theorization of and direct research into emotions has increased in recent years. The following section addresses what is known from the research about the significance of emotions in social education curriculum, teaching, and learning, focusing primarily on emotions and history education.

History curricula in countries around the world are part and parcel of the hidden curriculum of schooling, in that the curriculum

contains difficult-to-identify silences and discourses that establish emotional attachments to national and global narratives of people, places, and events (Brown & Brown, 2010; Helmsing, 2014; King et al., 2020; Rodríguez, 2020; Schugurensky, 2002; Shear et al., 2015). The emotional and political debates over what to include and exclude from the history curriculum reveal how shaping young people's relationships with historical narratives is significant to the purposes of education (Serwer, 2021; Symcox, 2002).

The official history curriculum often does not account for or align with how students encounter the past outside of school (Goldberg, 2017a; Levy, 2014; Martell, 2018), and students are often left to navigate the emotions associated with such gaps, silences, and contradictions on their own (Barton & McCully, 2010; Miles, 2019). Research in history education has demonstrated the significance of identity—racial, national, religious, ethnic, gender, etc.—in how students take up, resist, or negotiate the official school history curriculum (Barton & McCully, 2010; Epstein, 2009; Goldberg, 2017a; Gross & Wotipka, 2019; Tarc, 2013), and while the role of emotions has not been the focus of much of this research, the significance of emotions emerged time and again. Errázuriz's (2021) research into Chilean girls' political identity development specifically explored how emotional attachments to historical narratives are unevenly experienced in a history classroom. The dynamic movement and attachment of emotions was revealed as students encountered the history curriculum and responded with varying expressions of political identity, revealing that the "deep stories" (Boler & Davis, 2018) that attract and repel emotions are not shared by participants in the social space of the classroom.

While both teachers and students play a role in how the curriculum is taken up, enacted, and experienced, the teacher does "sit at the core of curriculum exchange and is absolutely essential to whatever takes place in the classroom space (Craig, 2009, p. 1053). Teachers try to influence the classroom's emotional environment through pedagogical decision making (Knight-Diop & Oesterreich, 2009; Sheppard & Levy, 2019). Social studies teachers often try to create and maintain what they view as an emotionally safe and comfortable learning environment for themselves and students, which can lead to the omission of controversial and difficult content from the curriculum (Gibbs, 2019; Hostetler & Neel, 2018; Rodríguez, 2020; Savenije & Goldberg, 2019; Vickery et al., 2022). Teachers will avoid teaching about difficult histories if teaching such history makes them uncomfortable or anxious, if they disagree with how the history is framed, or if they fear students' emotional reactions (Zembylas, 2016). Yet, there are also teachers who invite emotions into the history classroom in order to engage their students in particularly difficult topics and issues, challenge their views, and increase their awareness of different perspectives (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011; Garrett, 2017; Goldberg et al., 2019; McCully, 2006; Pace, 2021; Salinas et al., 2015).

When teachers do try to exclude particularly emotional topics from their classrooms, students' questions and contributions can still bring in unintended and uninvited emotional issues and perspectives (Garrett, 2020; Garrett & Alvey, 2021; Hostetler & Neel, 2018). The complex emotional ecology of classrooms is porous, embodied, communal, and influenced by those in and outside of the classroom (Garrett, 2020; Garrett & Alvey, 2021). Studying a discussion of current political events in an integrated Israeli-Palestinian elementary classroom, Bekerman and Zembylas (2011) found that "teachers seem to be the ones who define the 'legitimate emotions' and foreground the valuable feelings and desires" (2011, p. 1019). They also found that teachers reframe students' emotions to meet their own objectives for the lesson. In a later study in a Cypriot school, Zembylas et al. (2014) found that emotions are entangled in teachers' discourses. Such entanglements take the form of enacted pedagogical strategies that internalize cultural and political norms as well as collective memories.

The impact of teachers' emotional work in the classroom is important to consider. Keegan's (2019) research with West African immigrant students found that the "affective ties" teachers established with students influenced students' civic engagement and sense of belonging in schools. Here we see that a teacher's attention to issues of emotion is impactful not only in the space of the classroom, but also in how students engage with each other and ideas beyond the classroom.

3. The study

This research draws on data from a larger study exploring social studies teachers' conceptions of emotions in their classrooms. Initial analysis found that teachers viewed their classrooms as emotional spaces and made pedagogical decisions about what and how to teach in order to maintain "safe" and engaging learning environments (Sheppard and Levy, 2019). This analysis focuses more closely on two white history teachers, Michael and Margaret, who worked in large, urban, comprehensive high schools with primarily Black and Latinx populations. This article provides deeper analysis of the two teachers' descriptions of emotions in their classroom and what they revealed about the role of emotions in their history instruction. It is important to note that this research is not examining teachers' explicitly-stated or communicated emotional rules. Rather, it is through the teachers' reflections of what and how they taught and how emotions were encouraged, blocked, or responded to in class, that the rules governing acceptable ways of connecting with and learning from the past emerged from the data.

Michael and Margaret worked in the same school district in a mid-Atlantic city. Their district did not require any form of high stakes testing for high school social studies students. However, teachers in the district were evaluated annually using a relatively new, continually evolving teacher evaluation system. The evaluation system offered teachers in high poverty schools financial compensation if they were categorized as highly effective in impacting student academic growth. Michael and Margaret both taught in high-poverty, neighborhood high schools.

Zembylas (2005) argued that emotions are discursive practices "interwoven with issues of power, identity and resistance in teaching" (p.936). While not an analysis of identity, this study takes teachers' and students' identities into account as factors that influences how history is both taught and learned. Michael self-identified as a white male in his forties with 18 years of teaching experience, while Margaret self-identified as a white female in her late twenties in her first year of teaching. Michael taught U.S. history in a high school that was 53% Black, 43% Hispanic, and 100% FRPL, while Margaret taught world history at another high school that was 98% Black and had 100% FRPL. For this research, each teacher participated in an approximately 60-min interview that

was transcribed verbatim. These two teachers were selected for further analysis because they taught history, worked in similar contexts (i.e., the same school district in comprehensive high schools), spoke openly about the role of emotions in their classrooms, and described examples of the how emotions influenced their pedagogical decisions.

Given that the initial analysis of the full data set found teachers conceptualized classrooms as emotional spaces (Sheppard and Levy, 2019), this iteration of the study aimed to understand the emotional rules that governed those spaces. I focused this analysis on two teachers' reflections on their teaching in order to speculate about what emotional rules were present and influenced the social activities (i.e., learning history, building communities) that took place in their classrooms. Drawing on Gee (2007), I viewed language as a social practice that both reflects and builds social worlds, and I sought to uncover how emotional rules related to learning history were negotiated in and through the teachers' planning and teaching. This research addresses only a sliver of what took place in these teachers' classrooms, yet their reflections provided significant information about the central role of emotions in the negotiations among lived experiences, political dynamics, and social activities involved in learning about the past.

Analysis began with themes that emerged from the initial findings that teachers used emotions to create academic engagement, build relationships, and manage student behavior in their classrooms (Sheppard and Levy, 2019). Therefore, I first looked for evidence of how teachers talked about emotions in relation to specific social activities, namely learning history, relationship building, and managing student behavior. I developed three codes in order to do this: academic, caring, and disciplinary. These codes helped identify instances in which Michael and Margaret talked about:

- emotions shaping what and how students learned about history (academic)
- emotions connected to controlling or managing behavior (disciplinary)
- emotions aimed at shaping relationships or sense of community (caring)

Code	Example	Explanation
Academic	*And they didn't really latch on to the importance of the Spinning Jenny or the difference between capitalism and communism. A few of them did. They really got into child labor, for instance. They got into more of a social thing. I think it was just easier for them to imagine like, "Oh, god, can you imagine? How did that feel?"* (Margaret)	Here we see Margaret identifying emotional connection as a point of engaging students in learning content, specifically child labor during industrialization.
Disciplinary	*I don't do competitive Jeopardy games anymore because then the point is missed because then the emotions get too crazy! And we're supposed to just be reviewing for the quiz, but you're pissed because you lost a point? You know … I'm like, come on, that's not the point! So, I've totally reverted—we'll do things like that, but it's as a whole class, like working together* (Michael)	Here we see Michael adapting a pedagogical strategy to limit emotional reactions he identified as disruptive.
Caring	*[A student] felt very comfortable with me, almost finger-wagging me, like, "why did you do that?" You know, but then again at the same time, she was emotional. And now I recall, she was like, "why did you have to show that?" But in a joking kind of way, like, I know it's your job to teach us history, but why did you have to [put me in that position].* (Michael)	Here we see Michael reflecting on how his relationships with students influenced a student's emotional response to difficult content being shown in the classroom.

After the first round of coding, data was analyzed to determine if emotional rules could be identified either crosscutting both teachers' descriptions of their classrooms or within each teacher's reflection of practice. The next section presents the findings regarding how emotional rules addressed similar issues yet were enacted differently in each teacher's classroom.

4. Findings

The emotional rules in each teacher's classroom were shaped by their purposes for teaching history, were responsive to students' lives and identities, and influenced by the school district's sociopolitical context. Findings reveal that these teachers enacted emotional rules in their history classrooms by drawing on personal experiences and dominant education discourses. The emotional rules were evident in Michael and Margaret's choice of teaching materials and framing of historical content. Emotional rules were embedded in their strategies to foster student engagement and to help students feel supported in the learning process. Both teachers perceived that students' emotional connection to the historical content was a necessary step in learning history. However, the emotional rules at work in their classrooms created different learning experiences for the students.

4.1. Emotional rules that create and sustain learning communities

Both Michael and Margaret were intentional about creating caring, supportive learning environments in their classrooms. They each described going against the "administration" or "district" to create and sustain classroom communities, yet the emotional rules worked differently with each teacher.

Margaret's descriptions of her classroom and students revealed a deep commitment to her students' academic learning and overall well-being. She positioned herself as an advocate and defender of her students and as such, she worked to create an inclusive,

responsive, and supportive classroom environment. Margaret drew on her instincts, knowledge of her students, and capacity to emotionally connect with young people to create a caring learning community. She resisted the standardized behavioral rules and guidelines advocated for by the school and district in order to ensure her students were able to emotionally and intellectually engage with her lessons.

For example, students calling out in class without raising hands was deeply frowned upon in her school, yet Margaret explained why such behavior expectations were not hard and fast rules in her classroom.

> If a [student is] calling out, if it's a calling out but they are so dead on, then that's ok. Like if it's the Treaty of Versailles and we're taking Cornell notes on how the Treaty of Versailles is punishing Germany. And you have a kid like, "That's too much! Oh, man. Oh, that's too much." Then I don't necessarily mind the quieter comments. If it's profane and loud or if it's simply loud, then I might get after them. I might build off that a little bit more. I might be like, "Yeah. I'd love a silent hand next time, but yeah." And it's probably not good because I'm encouraging it. But I might make a non-verbal to be like, "That's interesting. Like, I want to hear more of that." Like, you know, I might get them to share that a little bit more and then try to use that as like some kind of like hook, like, "Oh, it's interesting you're saying that because … "

Margaret's reflection shows how the emotional rules in her classroom allowed students to be moved by what they were learning, to express emotion out loud and without permission. In this example she allowed a student to express outrage over how harshly the Treaty of Versailles punished Germany after World War I. She was clear that she was discerning about what types of calling out are allowed: emotional expressions that reflect interest in or learning about the historical content of the lesson. She was also aware that this was not what is expected of her as a teacher, "it's probably not good because I am encouraging it [calling out]." But she prioritized students' enjoyment and engagement with learning history over external behavior expectations that students learn quietly in controlled environments.

Margaret's resistance to district expectations about student behavior in the classroom also revealed ways that she valued her students' emotions and saw the classroom as a space where emotions related to learning history should be cultivated and engaged.

> *Teach Like a Champion*[1] is like the gospel of [the district] public schools. And there's a technique in *Teach Like a Champion* called "wrong is wrong," and it's basically chastising teachers for what we'll sometimes do—where that kid who never participates, he tried, but it's wrong. We shouldn't praise him. We shouldn't stretch his answer too much to try to find something good in there. It's really like if it's wrong, it's wrong, and we're not doing him any favors if we say, like, "Well, good, but this is what actually happened." So, my colleague and I were talking about how we feel that our kids, like *our* kids, to get them not to shut down, there needs to be that like, "Good, good." Like we're constantly tearing down walls. It's just sort of, like, "Oh, that's great. I'm glad you said that, you know, but let's talk about this instead." So, the walls go up pretty easily for our kids already. I've just found that when I try to address more emotions in history and it's not necessarily just base recall […] I get farther. I get farther with them, and they stay more engaged. We're all happier at the end of the day than necessarily the just plain facts.

Here again, Margaret was thinking about her students' emotions, and creating space in her classroom for students to associate positive emotional experiences with learning history. Margaret resisted standardizing her responses to students' struggles with learning; rather, she supported a classroom environment where students could be present, seen, and open to learning. Margaret also mentioned using emotions as a pathway to "getting farther" with students' learning about history. She specifically referenced "tearing down walls" to student learning and described making instructional choices for her students that did not "shut them down." These choices reflect emotional rules that prioritized students' feeling respected in the classroom. Margaret's description revealed that in a supportive learning environment, she belieived her students were better able to engage with the content through their emotions and were "all happier" as a result.

As with Margaret's emotional rules, Michael's emotional rules reflected resistance to district expectations. Even before considering teaching and learning historical content, he attended to the emotional conditions in his classroom. Michael's emotional rules created a space in his classroom for students to be present and part of a community:

> You know, when the bell rings, [administrators say], "Shut your door and don't let students in your classroom. They've got to go get a pass." It's like, oh my God, really? I can see you coming, but the bell rang, and I'm told I'm supposed to shut the door and not let you in? Those are some emotions playing. I get reprimanded for not following those rules, and then I go back and say, "Well, this is why I let him in, because if I shut the door, he'd never come back."

Like Margaret, Michael discussed creating a classroom environment that allowed students access to learning. While Margaret discussed "tearing down walls" metaphorically, in terms of making students feel heard and respected when answering questions, Michael was making sure students had physical access to his classroom. He commented that closing the door on a student would lead to "some emotions playing." Michael may have been referring to his own emotions regarding closing the door on a student as well as the student's emotional experience of having a teacher shut the door on him. Michael knew the harm closing the door could cause: "he'd never come back." Unspoken in this reflection is what it would mean for the rest of the class to see their teacher shut the door on a classmate. Michael prioritized his relationship with his students over the district's policy to maximize uninterrupted instructional time. Here we see evidence of how emotional rules helped create the classroom as a space for community and belonging.

Building community was also curricular work in Michael's classroom. He described the first assignment he gave students:

[1] Lemov, D. (2015). *Teach like a champion 2.0: 62 techniques that put students on the path to college*. Jossey-Bass.

> [The first assignment was a] graph of life. It's the idea that you must know your own history before you study other people's history. It's kind of the connection to the Sankofa idea, it's this West African bird that its body moves one way, but the neck is turned the other way, and this idea that you must know your past before you move to the future. So, we start our course off with getting to know yourselves, our peers, our school, and community, and then we get to know the course, and then we start our course, so it's the first little mini unit. [*Michael describes how he models the assignment by sharing his own graph of life with the class.*] So, it's part of just sharing what people can be like. Plus, it's the idea of, we're going to be together and we're going to go hard on topics at times and I want them to know me, that's important. So that's the modeling I guess I do for them to get them ready for it, and I warn them that it's going to be hard.

The graph of life assignment asked students to identify key events from their personal lives, put them on a timeline, and to reflect on how these events had influenced them. Students then shared their assignments with the class and discussed ways that the past influenced the present. Michael completed a graph of life as a model and he explained that he cried while reflecting on his father's death when he presented his graph of life to students. He also described the emotions students experienced sharing about their own lives when presenting their graphs. Michael's emotional rules were evident in the assignment and how he spoke about relationships: "we're going to be together," and "I want them to know me." Sharing emotions and personal stories helped established relationships and community in Michael's classroom. His many years of teaching led him to understand students would struggle with learning U.S. history: "it's going to be hard." The emotional rules in Michael's classroom provided a supportive space to be together and to know each other so that the difficult work of learning history could be done.

The emotional rules that fostered and sustained community in Margaret's classroom were rooted in academic learning. Emotions were valued for creating space for students to engage with the historical content, to make mistakes, and to learn. Michael's emotional rules were grounded in relationship-building and feelings of personal connection. These emotions helped students develop trust (with Michael and with other students) so that learning could take place.

4.2. Emotional rules for making personal connections to history

While the emotional rules in Michael and Margaret's classrooms were similar when it came to creating supportive classroom communities, they differed significantly when it came to students learning history. The emotional rules in Michael's classroom disrupted a standardized history curriculum that he worried limited students' emotional engagement with each other, the community, and the past. They were connected to his goals as a social studies teacher, which he described as follows:

> to help [students], not just to be active out in the real world, but also to help them categorize things so they're not left wondering, so they have places to categorize things, so they have places to put their frustration, or their questions.

He wanted students to understand the "real world" to help them "categorize" or make sense of what they experience out in the world, including their emotions. He connected this process of being active in and trying to understand the world to "frustration." He anticipated students' emotions and created space for them by making instructional and curricular decisions that engaged his students in making sense of a complex and painful world.

His enactment of emotional pedagogies that embraced a relational way of knowing demonstrated how he pushed against the conception of the classroom as a bounded space where students learn history removed from their subjectivities and everyday lives. The previous section described how Michael started the year with an assignment that required students to think about their personal histories. He continued to think about students' personal connections to history as he designed and taught his US history course. Michael explained:

> When they [district administrators] want the student responses, it's got to be text supported and it's got to be text-dependent answers and things like that. But I'm always still slipping in some, "Oh, how does this make you feel?" You know, if you're looking at a document, if you're analyzing something, you know, "What's your reaction?" Because I think it matters. Helping them understand their emotions matters for certain topics, and I think that's part of it, because it can be a hook, it's a great hook.

Michael wanted students to connect personally with what they were learning and asked them specifically to connect their emotions to the content. Note that Michael was not asking students to engage in historical empathy, trying to understand the emotions of historical actors (Brooks, 2011). Rather, he asked students to consider their own emotions, to better understand *themselves* in relation to what they were learning.

Michael made instructional choices that fostered students' personal connection with history to help them make sense of the world they lived in. He described choosing to teach Alexander's (2010) *The New Jim Crow*[2] based on his knowledge of incarceration rates in the city and of students' family lives:

> [The lesson] looked at the post-Civil War labor system that went into the South and how they just replicated, instead of slavery, they just used this awful labor scheme, and it was imprisonment. And one of my brightest students was just totally disengaged, and finally, she was like, "You know, I just don't want to have to look at this, you know? My mother's been in prison, and this is really hard." And oh, it just killed me […] So when those things happen, wow, they really affect me, because you know, at one point, I feel guilty, and sorry, for forcing you into feeling this pain. And then part of me is like, okay, now let's do something with it, with that pain, you know? So, I did ask her, "Okay, how did that make you feel? Were you able to …" and she really couldn't

[2] *Alexander, M. (2010)*. The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness. *The New Press*.

> go anywhere with it at that moment. I have a great relationship with this student, I think that depends on, as a good teacher, have you been able to establish a relationship that allows a kid to talk to you about it later, or are they just going to keep it bottled up, and it's going to ruin their day, or their week, because I've asked a question that just crushed them. And we're bound to do that in social studies.

Here, Michael was a bit taken aback and felt "guilty" for the student's "pain" and "disengagement," even though he had purposefully chosen the content to be relevant to students' lives. Yet, he continued to defend the decision to teach the material by wanting to "do something with … the pain." He wanted to direct students' emotional responses, to make their emotions useful. Yet, he was unable to control *how* students engaged with the emotional rules that aimed to direct the connections among personal experiences, emotions, and learning history. The rules created space for personal connections to the past, but not the shape and contours of those connections. Michael recognized the danger of the content he taught, warning that only a "good teacher" who had a "great relationship" with the student could salvage meaning from the suffering that was experienced in the encounter with difficult historical knowledge. He acknowledged that teachers are "bound to do that in social studies," alluding to the idea that teaching history is emotional and problematic regardless of the relationship a teacher has with students. In Michael's classroom, the emotional rules that created space for students to personally connect to history had paradoxical results: students might be moved to engage with or disengage from the content he presented.

4.3. Emotional rules for learning academic history

This type of personal entanglement with the past leading to pain and disengagement was something Margaret actively tried to avoid in her classroom. Margaret's emotional rules supported student engagement with academic knowledge, specifically the history curriculum. Margaret adjusted the district's history curriculum to meet her students' diverse academic skill levels yet maintained a commitment to ensuring students learned the historical content. She saw academic success as a goal for herself and her students and viewed history education as a pathway to understanding what it means to be human in a difficult world.

As a first-year teacher, Margaret was working to meet the learning needs of her students as well as the standards of the district's teacher evaluation system. The emotional rules in her classroom created the space for successful history teaching and learning. Specifically, she saw students' capacity to understand others' emotions as a "hook" for students understanding history. Margaret explained:

> We're studying the things that make us human, and so much of this, so many decisions have relied on emotion, and our students can tap into that. I think it can be more accessible. It can kind of break down those, like, "I don't want to seem stupid" walls.

While Michael focused on his students' capacity to *personally* connect to historical actors and events, Margaret used her students' concern for humanity as a tool for teaching history. She explained, "when they're angry about something is when you've made some progress and you can make some more inroads cognitively and in meaningful ways to their world today." Margaret talked about emotion—anger, specifically—as a tool for students to "cognitively" learn history and also to see history's relevance to "their world today." An example she gave was teaching about Pearl Harbor:

> We're talking about Pearl Harbor. We've set up. We've taken notes on how Japan has been expanding their empire in Asia through imperialism. The United States is threatening sanctions. "And this makes Japan … ?" And I can ask students this. I can see there's a little bit of anticipation, like to keep them engaged through emotions. I can say, "Japan's imperializing, this has resulted in the US threatening sanctions, which means not selling them any more resources. Guys, how do you think Japan feels about this?" and I can rely on emotion to keep them engaged. […] And we watch like a clip of that really terrible movie, *Pearl Harbor*, you know, but they love it. And then I can ask them, "How do you think Americans all over the country felt about Pearl Harbor? How do you think they reacted?"

Margaret asked the class to consider how Japan felt and how Americans felt, not how the students felt. She chose a Hollywood film that is historically questionable, but exciting and dramatic. In her pedagogical choices, she aimed to "tap into" students' emotions without exploiting personal connections to what they were learning. Margaret explained:

> I don't know what my students have seen. I'm not going to make assumptions that they live in violent parts of the city, or they're associated with the staff announcements I hear about, you know, former students and students who died of gunshot wounds. I'm not going to assume, but I'm not going to go there. I don't know what they're experiencing. I don't know if they have a recently deceased grandparent, if mom is real sick. I don't know everything about my kids. I'm not doing like highly, highly graphic content. We'll talk about it, but I don't want to show it. I don't want that taking a wrong turn and going someplace, someplace deeply personal.

Despite aiming to engage students emotionally around content, Margaret limited the depth of suffering she was willing to bring into the classroom. Issues of identity shaped her understanding of what might make historical suffering "deeply personal." Simultaneously drawing upon and resisting ideas that her urban, Black students had traumatic experiences in their lives, Margaret enacted emotional rules that could steer students from making personal connections with difficult histories.

Margaret was aware of her whiteness and reflected on the problematic ways in which being white influenced her teaching and her students. Responding to a question about histories she does not like teaching, she said:

> My students have probably, because of the world we live in, they have probably gotten the message, the wrong message, that their lives don't matter as much. I feel it's not a fun place for me to be as a white person, having to communicate really racist ideas that dictated a lot of world history to them when our world is in the state that it is. If a lot of these racial ideas and racially

> charged policies were completely in the past, it might be easier. I don't like it because I don't like making them feel hopeless, I guess. And history doesn't always have a clean and neat narrative arc, but I don't like being in the really messy parts of them.

Here, Margaret identified race as a factor that is emotional and difficult for her because it connects the pain of the past to the pain students encounter in their lives. She did not avoid teaching about racist histories but worked to control students' emotional engagement with issues of race.

Margaret managed the emotional difficulty of studying racism in world history by making sure students understood why they were learning about racism. For example, before teaching about the concept of the white man's burden, she spoke with her classes about why she was asking them to read racist rationales for imperialism.

> "Well, but why do we study ugly history? Like slavery is so ugly. Why do we study it?" And it's then it's kind of interesting to get their responses from there. Some of those are emotional. It can be like, "Because that's our family." There will be a kid or two who'll come up with the response like, "So it doesn't happen again," something like that. Then I was like, "Yeah. So, these are all good reasons to study ugly history. And we have to study some … we have to study some ugly history in here for all of the reasons you guys just mentioned."

Margaret was aware of the emotional weight of what she was teaching and created a way to make learning the difficult history purposeful. While she could not eliminate students' personal connections to the past, having a shared purpose for confronting the racism that bridged suffering from the past into the present provided an approved direction for the emotions to move, hopefully avoiding what made Margaret uncomfortable—emotions taking a "wrong turn," and becoming "too personal." So, in her classroom again, the emotional rules acknowledged the emotionality of history but attempted to limit the space students had for making history personal.

The emotional rules in both Michael and Margaret's classrooms sustained their visions of supportive learning communities. And while the emotional rules in Michael's classroom engaged students in making personal connections to the past, Margaret wanted something different in her classroom. Instead, in her classroom, the emotional rules supported students' engagement with academic historical knowledge.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study further demonstrates the significance of emotions in teaching history (Sheppard & Levy, 2019; Zembylas, 2016; Zembylas et al., 2014), providing examples of the complexity involved when teachers navigate dominant discourses about students and history education with their own professional goals in the unique contexts of their classrooms. Teachers' experiences, conceptions of history, and purposes for teaching influenced when and how they established emotional rules through their pedagogical choices. Michael and Margaret's emotional rules were mainly present in two areas of their teaching: creating a caring learning community (Sheppard, 2010) and humanizing the history curriculum (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Blevins et al., 2020). The emotional rules were embedded in pedagogical decisions and negotiated in the unique social space of each teacher's classroom. The enactment of emotional rules included improvisational moves, planned disruptions of dominant educational expectations, as well as adherence to social expectations related to teaching, student learning, and history education.

With Margaret we saw a beginning teacher influenced by dominant discourses regarding how to teach and how students should learn. These discourses were powerful because they constituted the teacher evaluation system used by the district and influenced her salary and reputation as a beginning teacher. The desire to prepare students for traditional conceptions academic success, and to be a teacher who was successful at improving student learning, influenced how she engaged students' emotions in learning history. To support her students' academic success, Margaret actively disrupted the district's discourses about controlling student behavior in class to establish an emotional environment she found more conducive to student learning. Her emotional rules were utilitarian, in support of students learning history, while also rooted in a humanism that resisted a purely rational engagement with the past. The emotional rules were also framed by her personal beliefs that deepening students' historical knowledge, in concert with academic success, could be transformative in students' lives.

In Michael we saw an experienced and established teacher who enacted emotional rules deeply aligned to personal beliefs about teaching and learning history that he had developed over more than a decade of teaching in this school district. His teaching was less invested in the school district's conceptions of student academic growth and more resistant to their expectations about both student behavior and teaching history (Lasky, 2005). He identified the history classroom as a site of identity development and made pedagogical decisions to support students' ability to explore who they were, to connect with each other, the past, and the world they lived in while engaging with historical knowledge in ways that he hoped would be transformative in their lives.

For Michael, humanizing the history curriculum required building meaningful relationships in the classroom and choosing historical content that helped students see themselves in history. Michael's emotional rules helped him establish a learning environment defined by personal and relational growth and connection. Michael interwove learning history with students' lived experiences. His curricular choices reflected a desire to personally engage students with the difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998), painful forces, structures, and histories that he believed deeply shaped and defined their lives. Like Garrett (2017), who called for opening spaces for students to connect their inner lives to the difficulty of the world, Michael made space for and invited emotions into his classroom. He promoted emotional rules that cultivated trust and built relationships, aiming to help students navigate the emotional uncertainty of personally connecting with the past. Even so, students were not always willing or able to confront difficult historical knowledge. Whereas Michael believed that his relationships with students and the trusting, relational community created in classroom would make learning from difficult knowledge possible, it was not always the case in his class (Tarc, 2013).

In Margaret's classroom the emotional rules helped students gain access to historical knowledge. Her emotional rules were intended to engage the students' understanding of emotions as a conduit to learning history, while limiting personal connections to the past. The emotional rules in her classroom sustained a space reflective of a curriculum focused on historical empathy (Brooks, 2010; Barton & Levstik, 2005). She engaged emotions in her classroom to create a space where students felt heard and encouraged to learn, creating a supportive environment that allowed them to engage their emotions as tools for learning history. Margaret's emotional rules also helped her establish historical relevance; she prioritized developing historical empathy and a communal purpose for studying the painful past over connecting history to students' personal lives.

Michael and Margaret's reflections revealed how deeply they connected teaching and learning history with emotions. Margaret and Michael's emotional rules were shaped by their identities (Zembylas, 2005), reflected their purposes for teaching history, and challenged dominant conceptions of schooling that contradicted their own values. Their emotional rules revealed how they created space, boundaries, and directions for students' emotions and for a more holistic and humanizing history in their classrooms.

The teachers' rules revealed a form of teacher agency that resisted the official history curriculum in order to make the content relevant to students' lives. The differences between Michael and Margaret's emotional rules reveal the complexity entailed in making history relevant. Their emotional rules established different forms of relevancy – Margaret's rules were more firmly rooted in fostering historical empathy, while Michael's rules aimed for making direct connections between students' lives and history. Margaret and Michael emotional rules, reflective of their knowledge of students, local contexts, and their personal purposes for teaching history (Blevins et al., 2020), provide examples of teacher agency, of forms of resistance to dominant education discourse, and of how teachers maintained a sense of authenticity in their classrooms.

This study is constrained in that only the teachers' perspectives and reflections are addressed. Further research is needed to better understand how emotional rules are followed, resisted, or negotiated as students, teachers, and the curriculum interact in the shared space of the classroom. It is important to study how students are engaging with teacher's emotional rules in the classroom as well as the emotional rules that they are carrying with them into the classroom. While this study provides significant insight into two teachers' reflections and perceptions of emotions in their classrooms, what is still needed is an analysis of how the teachers' emotional rules, embedded in their interpretations of history and pedagogical decisions, are enacted and negotiated with students.

Margaret and Michael provided further evidence regarding the significant role emotions play in how history teacher's make decisions about how they teach, what content they include in the curriculum, and how they respond to students (Sheppard & Levy, 2019). A general implication is from this study is that learning to consider, anticipate, and respond to emotions is necessary to developing teacher agency, criticality, and an authenticity when teaching history. Teacher education has an important role to play in ensuring teachers learn about how emotions work in classrooms. Part and parcel of that work is supporting teachers' awareness of the social and dynamic role emotions play in learning history. It is important that social studies teachers develop an understanding of how emotions work in establishing and resisting relations of power, specifically in how people learn history together and how that knowledge is put to use.

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