Revitalizing the Role of Relative Deprivation in Social Movement Emergence:
An Analysis of Contemporary Teacher Protest Strikes

By

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"49th is Not OK"; "47 States Ahead of Us Jimmy"; "AZ Ranks 50th in Salary" read protest signs in teacher protest strikes taking place in Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Arizona in 2018 (See Figure 1; Brandes 2018; Cano, White and Altavena 2018; Weiner 2018). Looking at these signs, and similar signs in numerous other strike locations across the country would lead an observer to expect that teachers felt relatively deprived in comparison with teachers working in other states and that this was a grievance that led to their collective action. This presumption aligns with classical conceptions of the role of relative deprivation in the emergence of social movements. Yet, this is a perspective that is not generally pursued in contemporary social movement literature. However, the ubiquitous protest signs held by teachers make it clear that relative deprivation did play an important role in these strikes.

Relative deprivation can be broadly defined as self-appraisals that individuals or groups make through the process of comparing themselves with a reference group that is viewed as comparable or equal to themselves in some way(s), yet better off than they are in other way(s) (Merton 1949:42). This reference group can be other individuals; groups of people; or even themself/themselves at a past time (Hyman 1942; Kelley 1952; Merton 1968; Stouffer et al. 1949).

This project has the goal of understanding ways in which teachers experience relative deprivation and the role of relative deprivation in launching the contemporary teacher protest strikes through examining the narratives of teachers who were also leaders in their local protest strikes. I have three overarching research questions for this study: (1) How do teachers describe social comparison and relative deprivation? (2) What function does relative deprivation in the form of comparison to other groups of people play in the emergence of contemporary teacher

protest strikes? (3) What function does relative deprivation to the past play in the emergence of contemporary teacher protest strikes?

BACKGROUND

Within the first two school years of this recent wave of K-12 public-school teacher strikes, protest strikes occurred in 14 states (see Appendix A for a timeline, overview, and details about each specific work action). The first strike occurred in the spring of 2018 in West Virginia where teachers in all public-school districts in the state did not show up for regularly-scheduled classes in protest. This statewide strike was closely followed by strikes in Kentucky, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Arizona, Colorado, and North Carolina. The next fall, teachers in Washington and Illinois went on strike. Then, in the spring semester of 2019, teachers in several more states initiated strikes (California, Virginia, Colorado, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and New Jersey[1]) or went back on strike (i.e., Kentucky, Colorado, North Carolina, and West Virginia). This project focuses on the school years of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, and, more specifically, three semesters, spring 2018, fall 2018, and spring 2019, because it was during these periods when the strikes occurred (there were no known public-school teacher strikes in 2017; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). Given that all teacher strikes except for three single-district strikes (two in New Jersey and one in Illinois) occurred in school districts within the Southern and Western regions of the contiguous U.S. (as designated by the US Census, see Figure 2), I limit my focus to these two regions.

[1] The second strike in New Jersey (Franklin Lakes) was another single-district strike in a different district than the first New Jersey strike (Jersey City).

STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The following chapters of this dissertation will develop my project. Chapter 2 will discuss theories of collective action in social movements and the utility of these theories for explaining the emergence of the teacher strikes. I will make the case for the importance of relative deprivation theory. I will also describe how connections between relative deprivation and quotidian disruption and framing are important for movement emergence. Then, in Chapter 3, I will describe my research design and methodology. In Chapter 4, I will provide an analysis of the ways in which teachers describe the experience of relative deprivation in comparison to others and the inequities that these comparisons reveal. Chapter 5 will analyze the role of relative deprivation in comparison to others in the recent 2018 and 2019 wave of contemporary teacher protest strikes. Chapter 6 will analyze how teachers experience relative deprivation to the past and the role that this played in this wave of contemporary teacher protest strikes. Finally, Chapter 7 will present a conclusion of my dissertation.

Chapter 2: Theories of Movement Emergence Through the Lens of Contemporary Teacher Strikes

To explain the development of the recent teacher strikes, I draw on various theories of social movement emergence. In this section I describe these theories of social movement emergence in relation to the teacher protest strikes of 2018 and 2019. To do this, I draw on media reports of the strikes to develop expectations for understanding the emergence of the teacher strike protests. The media reports I draw on in this chapter center on the initial large-scale teacher strikes, particularly in West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Arizona, but the interview data I examine in the following analysis chapters (chapters 4-6) center on all of the large and small-scale K-12 public teacher strikes from the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years in the Western and Southern United States (as designated by the US Census; see Figure 6). The interview data I gathered involved teacher leaders from all of the strikes in these regions in this timeframe.

I will first offer some key definitions related to this project. Then I will discuss theories of collective action that are tied to grievances: strain, quotidian disruption, and relative deprivation. After that, I will turn to a consideration of the utility of resource mobilization, political opportunity, diffusion, and framing theories in understanding contemporary teacher protest strikes.

KEY DEFINITIONS

There are numerous definitions of social movements. McCarthy and Zald (1977:1217-1218), for example, use the following as their definition of a social movement: "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the

social structure and/or reward distribution of a society." However, Tilly states "the term social movement applies most usefully to a sustained interaction between a specific set of authorities and various spokespersons for a given challenge to those authorities" (1984: 305). And, Tarrow describes social movements as "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities" (Tarrow 1998: 4). My definition of a social movement incorporates elements of all three of these commonly cited definitions. I define a social movement *as a set of challenges by those sharing an overarching goal and working towards outcomes with the purpose of achieving elements of this shared goal.* I see the wave of teacher protest strikes in 2018 and 2019 as a social movement. Teachers shared the goal of improving, or in some cases saving, public education and the situation of teachers and/or students. Protest events in each location focused on achieving various outcomes (e.g., increasing funding in a particular district) in alignment with this shared goal.

Protests are defined as actions taken to express a grievance or set of grievances. These events usually have the purpose of sending a message to a group or groups that could potentially alleviate the grievance (Koopmans and Rucht 2002). Teachers primarily targeted legislators or school boards in this wave of strikes and, again, their messages encompassed grievances related to the current state of public education, especially within their district, area, or state.

Protests can take many different forms. In this dissertation, I focus on work stoppages or strikes. Strikes are a specific type of protest that withholds labor. This is a significant form of protest since it affects the structural functioning of school systems. Teachers have grievances, and since they do not individually command structural power (Schwartz 1976) within their educational organizations, they must resort to withholding labor collectively, as a means of attempting to shift the power to themselves. This action not only draws attention to the

grievances, but also demands ameliorative steps through the leverage exerted by this disruptive action in the workplace, withholding labor (Koopmans and Rucht 2002).

I define a strike as an interruption in a normally-scheduled work day due to workers, in this case teachers, not showing up to work (school) in protest. I use the term protest strike to refer to any teacher action whereby teachers did not work a regularly-scheduled school day in protest. This phenomenon can be described using various terms such as strike, walkout, wildcat strike work action, work stoppage and/or sick out (since sick days were frequently used as a way to participate in these protest events, as described by Cano, Santistevan, White, and Altavena 2018). Teachers use all of these terms to describe their collective action in various locales (see, for example, Goldstein 2018; McLaren 2019; Zwang-Weissman 2019). The choice of language used by teachers in sometimes not calling their actions a strike in favor of other terms such as "sick out" could potentially be strategic because of the fact that striking is illegal for teachers in many of the states of focus. Thus, while I use the term protest strike, I note that many of my participants did not use this language. In the next section, I consider the utility of understanding these strikes through the lens of various sociological theories of movement emergence.

THEORIES OF MOVEMENT EMERGENCE

In this section, I consider theories used by social movement scholars in sociology to explain movement emergence. I begin by describing two of the most popular theories of movement emergence: resource mobilization and political opportunity. I then will describe diffusion theory which emerged in popularity following resource mobilization and political opportunity theories. After that, I will describe grievance-based theories of movement

emergence, including relative deprivation which forms the foundation of this dissertation. Finally, I focus on framing which is also useful to my analyses.

Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource mobilization theory emphasizes the importance of mobilizing various resources (e.g., cohesion, money, leadership, knowledge, technology) and using existing organizational infrastructure in launching protests (Oberschall 1973; Edwards and McCarthy 2004; McCarthy and Zald 1977). This model was developed, at least in part, as a response to a perceived insufficiency of early grievance models of movement emergence due to the supposed pervasive nature of grievances (Jenkins and Perrow 1977). Resource mobilization theorists argued that grievances were constant, but the amount of resources varied and, therefore, the level of resources provided a powerful analytic tool for understanding movement emergence (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Jenkens and Perrow 1977). However, other scholars (e.g., Simmons 2014; Walsh 1981) criticize this perspective because it neglects to consider the local context within which individuals are embedded. This is relevant when considering contemporary teacher protests due to variation from context to context and the shared experiences of teachers within particular settings. The fact that these protests emerged primarily at the district and state level shows that local contexts matter with regard to the shared grievances among teachers in their localities. Further, as will be described below, scholars (e.g., Snow et al. 1988) have shown that grievances are not necessarily constant.

Teacher unions are an organizational structure related to teacher activism with the potential of being a powerful resource. While the strength, availability, and utilization of existing union structures varied across locales with teacher strikes, for the pioneering 2018 strikes, unions

took a secondary role and sometimes were blamed for failures met by striking teachers (Turner et al. 2018). However, for later strikes, especially single-district strikes, unions were more vital in organizing the activism. Thus, the relationship between union structures and teacher protest strikes was inconsistent. This suggests that resource mobilization theory, at least in terms of union organizations, may not be as useful in understanding these teacher strikes as grievance-based theories.

As the strikes went on in Oklahoma, for example, the Oklahoma Education Association, the Oklahoma state chapter of the National Education Association took on the role of negotiating with lawmakers in an attempt to meet the demands of striking teachers. However, this resulted in few gains and Larry Cagle, a high school English teacher and leader of Oklahoma Teachers United (a grassroots group organized via Facebook) expressed disdain about the lack of progress that unions were able to achieve and also the fact that unions encouraged teachers to get back in the classroom after nine days of striking without their demands being met. He stated on NPR, “In reality, we are truly, literally in a worse position than when we started,” and he offered this advice to Arizona teachers, "if there's one thing that Arizona needs to know today; it's don't give the unions the mic. Because they're not powerful enough" (Turner et al. 2018). However, in other locations of teacher protests, especially those of smaller scale and those initiated in 2019, unions took a more central role. In Los Angeles, for example, the strike was led entirely by the United Teachers of Los Angeles, the local consolidated union of Los Angeles teachers affiliated with both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers (Medina and Goldstein 2019; UTLA 2019). These examples suggest that unions structures and strength do not seem to correlate neatly with where strikes occurred.

In sum, resource mobilization does not seem to be helpful in understanding the contemporary wave of teacher protest strikes. Union structures were inconsistent among striking teachers.

Political Opportunity Theory

McAdam (1982) introduced the idea of political opportunities for social movements. McAdam builds off of Eisinger (1973) and Lipsky (1970) to describe opportunity in social movements as when the political environment signals its potential receptiveness to the movement's demands. Thus, for McAdam, a political opportunity comes about when a shift from a closed political structure to an open one occurs (1982; 1996). Scholars of social movements have drawn upon political opportunity to explain the emergence of various movements, such as the Townsend movement (Amenta and Zald 1995), Korean white-collar labor movements (Suh 2001), and regional populism movements in Italy (Diani 1996). Political process theorists often make similar criticisms of grievance-based theories as those described in the above discussion of resource mobilization, describing grievances as "a fairly permanent and recurring feature of historical landscape" (Obershall 1989). Thus, they make the argument that there is more variation of political opportunities over time than grievances, thus making political opportunity theory more useful in explaining protest (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2004; Tarrow [1994] 1998; Tilly 1978, 2004) than grievance-based theories. However, the empirical utility of this theory in understanding protest emergence is mixed at best (Meyer 2004).

In the case of this wave of contemporary teacher protest strikes, the political environment was not necessarily receptive to teachers' demands in many locations of teacher protest strikes. Teachers are generally more liberal than conservative; due to Democratic leaders commonly

being somewhat more supportive than Republicans of traditional public education (Klein 2017). Both the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the two national-level teacher unions endorsed Hillary Clinton for president over Donald Trump for the 2016 election (Camera 2015). Lily Eckelsen García, the president of the NEA and Randi Weingarten, the president of the AFT, both have given searing appraisals of Trump and Betsy DeVos, the education secretary at the time of the strikes. In fact, the AFT sued DeVos due to failures of the public service loan forgiveness program because of the enormous effect on teachers (Stratford 2019).

The disdain for conservative education leaders is not limited to unions, however. A 2017 nationally-representative survey by Education Week asked teachers to "grade" the handling of K-12 policy by both Democrats and Republicans. Seventy percent of teachers gave Republicans a "D" or an "F" (Klein 2017), compared to 45% of teachers giving a "D" or "F" to Democrats (Klein 2017). Thus, while large percentages of teachers gave failing grades to each party, a majority of teachers view the handling of education policy by Republicans as inadequate. Thus, the receptiveness of the larger political environment to the politics of the group, in this case, would be unlikely if the environment is conservative.

The political environment can be considered at multiple levels (e.g., the national, state, and local level). At the national level, the Trump-Devos team is not receptive to the politics of teachers as a collective, as described above. At the state level, each of the first four locales of large-scale teacher strikes in 2018 (West Virginia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Arizona) are run by Republican governors and constituents in these states voted overwhelmingly for Trump (Politico 2018). Further, both Arizona and Oklahoma's state superintendents of schools are Republican and many of the striking teachers were in states and/counties that heavily voted for Donald

Trump in the 2016 presidential election, signaling a political environment with unsupportive education leaders and potentially unsupportive constituents too. However, some of the later strikes, such as those in California and Oregon were under Democratic leadership. This pattern of inconsistency of political leadership in teacher strike locations is present at the local level as well with some congressional districts under Democratic leadership and some under Republican leadership. Overall, this suggests that political opportunity theory may not be useful in explaining teacher protest strikes.

Diffusion Theory

Diffusion in social movement studies is defined as the ways in which social movements spread or diffuse from one site to another (Kolins Givan, Roberts and Soule 2010). The concept of diffusion has been less popular with social movement scholars until relatively recently (McAdam and Rucht 1993), compared with political opportunity. However, it is clear that "social movements in one site (or time period) are often inspired or influenced by movements elsewhere" (Kolins et al. 2010:1). Much of the research on diffusion focuses on the sharing of tactics or frames (e.g., Bohstedt and Williams 1988; McAdam and Rucht 1993; Snow and Benford 1992; Soule 1997), and/or what scholars argue are the mechanisms by which activism spreads from one site to another (e.g., Gould 1991; Meyer 2005; Oleson 2005).

Social media is also a space through which protests diffuse. Some recent empirical research has shown this. Wood (2015), for example, finds that Facebook facilitated the diffusion of the Indigenous-led Idle No More movement across Canada in 2012 and 2013. Similarly, Vasi and Suh (2016) find that activities on Facebook and Twitter were correlated with the diffusion of protest activism across locations.

Social media allows teachers to share grievances, ideas, and tactics across the nation. Large public Facebook groups such as those run by the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association frequently post about teacher activism. In fact, both of these pages had Facebook cover images of striking teachers during the wave of activism in 2018 and 2019.

News media often stated that teachers were inspired to protest by other teacher protests within the larger movement wave. For example, the *New York Times* reported that teachers in Oklahoma and Arizona often credited West Virginia for "giving them the guts to stand up" for themselves (Goldstein 2018a) (Goldstein 2018b). Therefore, due to the prevalence of teachers sharing information on social media and reports by news media, I argue that other teacher protests could have spurred subsequent protests.

In addition to protest diffusing across groups in largely the same period of time, protest can diffuse within a region through time. Hill and Rothchild (1992) argue that groups with long histories of conflict are often those that protest first, inspiring others to follow suit. In West Virginia, the first teacher protest strike in this wave of focus, the long history of labor movements (such as the Battle of Blair Mountain mine worker strike in 1921 and previous West Virginia teacher protests in 1990) within the state are cited in news media as a reason that this recent wave of teacher protest began there (Robertson and Bidgood 2018; Wallace-Wells 2018). Others report that teachers are standing up because "women are done being taken advantage of" following the women's march and #metoo movement (e.g., Nichols 2018).

Using the concepts of diffusion and political opportunity, McAdam (1995) develops the concepts of initiator protests and spin-off protests. He argues that spin-off protests diffuse from initiator protests. The spin-off protests then are not dependent on political opportunities because,

instead, they spread or diffuse from previous collective action. McAdam's theorizing is useful because it points to differences that may exist among protest strikes depending on when they arise within the larger movement.

Conell and Cohn (1995) also analyze when strikes occurred in a movement and argue that resource mobilization theorists have neglected to understand the need for information among labor strikers and that "strikes create strikes," regardless of how established a labor movement is. They, like McAdam, make a distinction between strikes occurring earlier in the movement (stimulus strikes) and strikes occurring later in the movement (imitator strikes) finding that imitator strikes tend to arise in areas with higher levels of unionization. This idea is echoed by Minkoff (1997) who finds that high levels of existing occupational organization is essential for spurring protests within a new location. Minkoff's study also contradicts McAdam's findings on initiator and spin-off movements in that she finds that diffusion of protests can only occur when favorable political opportunity structures exist in the new context.

The case of the 2018-2019 wave of teacher strikes also appears to contradict McAdam's theorizing because this movement seems to operate with a different sequence than proposed by McAdam. The initiator strike in this situation was West Virginia, a statewide strike (which included all districts within the state). The West Virginia strike occurred when conservative leadership, whose politics were very different from the political values of teachers, controlled the state. This meant that when the West Virginia initiator strike occurred, the political opportunity structure was closed. However, later strikes, such as the single district strikes in California, appear to have had more political opportunity due to the fact that they were in areas with

Democratic party leadership.[2] In fact, it appears as though strikes that were larger scale and those that occurred earlier in the movement wave had *less* political opportunity and those that were smaller-scale and occurred later in the movement wave had *more* political opportunity, which aligns with Minkoff's 1997 theorizing. Further, also in alignment with Minkhoff (1997) as well as Conell and Cohn (1995), later strikes appear to also have had higher levels of union organization and the strikes were often led by the local teacher union.

Overall, while diffusion theory seems to be important in the contemporary wave of teacher strikes, examining its utility in depth is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it does appear as though diffusion in combination with grievances may have led to the emergence of strike. Now I consider those theories that focus on the grievances of the protesters.

CONSIDERING THE UTILITY OF GRIEVANCE THEORIES OF MOVEMENT EMERGENCE IN UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY TEACHER STRIKE PROTESTS

Now, I consider three theories of movement emergence that center on the grievances of those who ultimately participate in the movement: strain, quotidian disruption, and relative deprivation theories. A grievance generally refers *to any wrong or injustice felt or feared by an actor.* Grievances are often connected to the lived experiences of individuals. Lived experiences can be broadly defined as the daily experiences and moments of everyday life (McIntosh and Wright 2018). For teachers, lived experiences can be experienced both at work and at home.

[2] While the teacher protest strikes in 2018 and 2019 do not appear to align with McAdam's theory of initiator and spin-off movements precisely with regard to political opportunity, his theory does indicate the utility of understanding differences in strikes depending on when they occur within the larger wave of the movement.

Shultziner (2013) calls for a conceptualization of protest movement emergence that is linked to lived experiences. He argues that grievances connected to lived experiences have a strong impact on the emotional and cognitive states of actors which can motivate an individual to participate in a protest and/or join a social movement organization. A focus on lived experiences as a source of grievances is useful in explaining teacher protests.

Grievances have to do with the cognitive and emotional experiences of individuals, but become powerful factors in protest generation when they are shared. In fact, Snow and Soule (2010) argue that powerfully felt, shared grievances are the most important of all conditions necessary for social movements to emerge.

Early conceptualizations of a grievance model of movement emergence are often today considered to be the "classical" model of movement emergence (Cohen 1985). Specifically, the classical model explaining movement emergence centers around three primary tenets: 1) social movements emerge due to societal strain or breakdown (e.g., Smelser 1962); 2) psychological distress is a necessary precursor to collective action; and 3) isolated individual dissatisfaction motivates insurgency (McAdam 1982/1999:11-19). In a broader sense, scholars using the classical model linked movement emergence, protest event materialization, and individual participation with grievances (Berkowitz, 1972; Hahn and Gonchar 1971; Gurr, 1970, Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). These expectations about the causes of activism emerged out of the Chicago school tradition and are generally focused on social-psychological factors (Cohen 1985).

The classical model was generally popular among social movement scholars until the 1970s when such a view lost favor due to emerging new arguments which discounted the classical model (e.g., Aya 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977). These new arguments pointed out

that the classical model viewed the emotional responses of protesters as centered on irrationality and volatility (Cohen 1985). Further, these new critics argued that classical grievance-based theories failed to understand political influences and the importance of resources in movement emergence. Thus, "classical" theories of movement emergence were eschewed in favor of "new" theories such as political opportunity and resource mobilization (Jenkins 1983; McAdam 1999; Snow et al. 1998).

In recent years, however, a resurgence of empirical interest in grievance-based theorizing to explain activism has arisen. For example, Simmons (2014) argues that grievances offer much insight into movement emergence. And, scholars have demonstrated the importance of grievances in recent empirical studies (e.g., Aslandis 2016; LeFebvre and Armstrong 2018; McKane and McCammon 2018).

Absent from recent research that attempts to understand the importance of grievances, however, is a recognition of the value of relative deprivation. I argue that relative deprivation is a key factor in this recent wave of teacher protest strikes. Relative deprivation, I argue, produced grievances that led teachers to strike. The process by which this occurred is depicted in Figure 3. This figure shows that structural strain leads to various forms of relative deprivation. Those forms of relative deprivation, including those connected to quotidian disruption (or the way in which lived experiences are affected) serve as grievances leading to protest strikes. Nevertheless, as this figure also shows, other forms of relative deprivation not directly connected to quotidian disruption, such as those in comparison with similarly-educated professionals, are also relevant to the teachers strikes through the way in which they are strategically framed to bring teachers on board with the activism.

To further develop my expectations of likely causes of the recent teacher strikes, below I define and describe each of these components (strain, relative deprivation, and quotidian disruption) of my proposed model of teacher strike emergence. Then, I describe framing theory because framing served as an important mechanism in my study in relation to relative deprivation due to the way relative deprivation was framed by teacher leaders to bring rank-and-file teachers on board with the activism . In the following section, I consider the utility of each of these theories in understanding the emergence of teacher strikes. I consider how structural strains led to relative deprivation and quotidian disruption. Later in my analyses, I investigate the teachers' grievances and how these grievances lead to the protest strikes. I also explore in my analysis the important role of the framing of grievances by teacher leaders in this process.

Strain Theory

Neil Smelser introduced what is commonly considered structural strain theory in 1962. Smelser identifies structural strain as vital to collective action stating that "some form of strain must be present if an episode of collective behavior is to occur" arguing that the more severe the strain, the more likely collective action is to occur (1962:48).

Strain in social movement theory can generally be described as any structural condition which causes stress or anxiety for a particular group. Even before strain theory was formally introduced by Smelser in 1962, scholars had already theorized the relationship of structural changes to destabilizing strain among particular populations, in turn leading to mass mobilization (e.g., Kornhauser 1959; Lang and Lang 1961; Turner and Killian 1961). However, the theorized mediating effect between strain and mobilization was isolation or psychological instability for these early scholars, including Smelser (McAdam 2003; Rule 1988; Schwartz 1976). Later

scholars critiqued strain theory's explanation that movement actors were motivated by emotional responses. Due to this, scholars, in time, turned away from this early strain theory and did so for decades in favor of other theories such as resource mobilization and political opportunity.

Nevertheless, there has been a recent resurgence of empirical interest in structural strain. McVeigh, for example, offers a structural explanation for the 1915-1925 increases in Ku Klux Klan mobilization that centers on structural economic and political transformations (1999) that led to feelings of economic and political devaluation and strain. Similarly, Soule and Van Dyke argue that the black church arson movement from 1989-1996 was brought about by race/ethnic competition for political and economic resources (1999). Additionally, for example, Van Dyke and Soule (2002) find that structural transformations, such as economic restructuring, influenced the patriot/militia movement in the 1990s.

Largely missing from the empirical resurgence of structural strain, however, is use of this theory to study other activists, beyond right wing, largely male activists. I argue that structural changes played a key role in the contemporary wave of teacher strikes in the form of economic and political restructuring, restructuring that produced strains. These macro-level changes were either intensified or ameliorated at the meso level (within states, cities, and/or school districts, for example) which produced the experiences of relative deprivation and quotidian disruption in the lives of teachers which, in turn, led to protest strikes (as demonstrated by Figure 3). Two main sources of structural strain that impact teachers are the failure to recover from the 2008 recession and the charter school movement.

The Failure to Recover After Recession and Decreased Education Funding

The 2008 recession was a major structural transformation that caused the strain of vast budget cuts across the K-12 education landscape and, even though the recession struck over a decade ago, education spending has not yet recovered to pre-recession levels (National Center for Education Statistics 2017). However, education spending varies state to state and district to district. In addition to reduced federal funding, at least 12 states cut formula funding by at least seven percent or more within the last decade, which is the largest form of state financial support for traditional public schools. Further, many red states also have enacted substantial tax cuts (Leachman, Masterson and Figeroa 2017; Gebeloff 2018). Overall, 29 states currently have a lower per-pupil spending rate than they did in 2008 (O'Leary and Mills 2018). Considering the local level, at least 19 states have lower average local government per-pupil spending since 2008, and in those districts that experienced growth in local funding, this usually was not enough to make up for funding lost due to state or federal cuts (Leachman, Masterson and Figeroa 2017).

These cuts in education spending resulting from the 2008 recession have led to pay freezes for teachers and staff, increases in class sizes, cutting of support staff, and deteriorating teaching conditions. In fact, the National Council on Teacher Quality conducted a survey of the 50 (41 responded) largest school districts in the country and found that 80% of these districts had frozen pay in the years immediately following the recession (NCTQ 2013). Further, another study found that inflation-adjusted teacher salaries fell between the years of 2010-2015 in 40 states and that in 32 states, per-pupil funding decreased after the recession (Katz 2018). The low-levels of funding due to the recession and their effects are often cited in news media as catalysts for the teacher protests (e.g., Gebeloff 2018; Hansen 2018). One Oklahoma teacher described her school post-recession as "not being able to have the lights on in the hallways, students having to

wear coats in class because the heat is not supposed to be above 57 degrees." (Férnandez Campbell and Amaria 2018).

The lingering negative effects of the recession have been exacerbated by the election of Donald Trump in 2016 whose administration repeatedly pushed forth budget plans that make substantial cuts to the U.S. Department of Education which provides federal funding to K-12 public schools. This led to the elimination of teacher-focused grants and the allocation of more funding to charter schools (Brown, Strauss, and Douglas Gabriel 2017; Ujifusa 2018), which will be described in the next section.

The Charter School Movement and Devaluation of Public Schools

Just ten days before the first 2018 teacher strike, Donald Trump, who was president of the United States at the time, announced plans to allocate an additional 500 million dollars in charter school funding, a 50% increase from the current federal charter-school spending levels (Ujifusa 2018). While the Trump-Devos[3] team focused much on charter school expansion, charter schools were already growing before they took office. In fact, in 2000 less than half a million students attended charter schools and, in 2016, over 3 million students were enrolled in a charter school (NCES 2019). In the fall of 2017, an estimated 300 new charter schools opened and approximately 150,000 students shifted from traditional public schools to charter schools (David and Hesla 2018).

[3] Betsy DeVos was the U.S. Secretary of Education at the time of the strikes. She is well-known for her support and advocacy for charter schools.

Charter schools are schools that receive public funding but operate independently from traditional K-12 school systems. Some ways in which they differ are: 1) They can be owned by private individuals, corporations (for profit or non-profit) or groups. 2) They are not held to the same standards of transparency or law compared with traditional public schools. Some examples of this are that they are not required to take major action in meetings that are open to the public or publish financial information, as are public schools governed by traditional school boards. 3) They are able to strategically control the students they serve through advertising, restrictive paperwork requirements, and limited program offerings. 4) They pay teachers less overall, require longer work hours for teachers, and generally do not allow employees to collectively bargain (Greene 2019; Jason 2017; Prothero 2019). Charter schools also siphon millions of dollars from traditional public schools in overall funding and, when students leave public schools to attend charters, reductions in per-pupil funding for public schools make it difficult for traditional school districts to cover costs of operation (Jason 2017).

Despite the nationwide push for charter schooling, the impact of charter schools varies by location. At the state level, there must be legislation to allow for charter schools to open. Forty-four out of 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, permit charter schools. Therefore, there are only six states that do not allow charter schools, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia (Wixom 2018). However, just a couple of weeks before the pioneering protests began in West Virginia, the WV Senate president, Mitch Carmichael, sponsored a charter school bill, permitting charter schools in West Virginia (Lannom 2018) which ultimately passed in the state Senate (Elbert 2018). This threatened a large structural change to education in West Virginia. Kentucky, another location of widespread teacher strikes,

was the most recent state to sign a charter school bill, allowing charter schools in the state for the first time as of March 21, 2017 (Foster 2018).

This structural change to the public-school sector is a main reason cited in news media for teacher collective action in West Virginia (Wong 2018). In fact, one of the demands that was met in order to end the strikes in 2018 in that state was a permanent tabling of all charter school bills (Mochaidean 2018). However, this "permanent" tabling was not permanent. New charter-school legislation reemerged in 2019, spurring another massive strike in West Virginia (Fernández Campbell 2019).

Close proximity of charter schools is also a reality in all of the other strike locations and a primary reason cited for many of the strikes (see Appendix A). In Los Angeles, for example, one in five students now attend charter schools due to exponential charter-school growth in the past decade which has led to a massive decline in students attending the public-school district and a funneling of money and teachers toward charter schools (where they are not generally permitted to unionize). In fact, the city of Los Angeles has more charter schools and students attending charter schools than any other locale in the country (Blume 2018). Thus, unsurprisingly, one of the demands of striking teachers was a cap on charter school expansion (Reilly 2019).

The situation for public education in Arizona is perhaps the most dire. Arizona has the largest percentage of its state's students in charter schools in the United States. Both Arizona and Oklahoma teacher protestors expressed concern about this structural change in education. Summer Schauldt, an art teacher in Phoenix, for example, lamented, "Charters are taking over our state" (Ocasio 2018) and Larry Cagle, a high school English teacher in Oklahoma stated:

> The reality is that conservatives like school vouchers and private schools and charter schools. They want to stop public education and turn it into a business, just like they do with the prisons and health care. The best way to confirm that you have a broken system that needs to be repaired is to not fund it and let it fall apart" (Pasqauntonio 2018).

Thus, as mentioned previously, charter school funding increases at the national level appear to have had an impact on federal budgets allocated to public education and the above narratives make it clear that state charter school funding has a large impact at the local level too.

Relative Deprivation Theory

The lack of recovery from the recession and the charter school movement are two structural changes that produced strains experienced by teachers. Structural strain may lead to a sense of relative deprivation. Relative deprivation theory is a grievance-based theory. Classical conceptions about the role of relative deprivation in social movements center around the idea that the experience of relative deprivation is form of a grievance that motivates activism.

Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Starr, and Williams (1949) first used the concept of relative deprivation to describe how those who make job-based comparisons with superiors expressed less job satisfaction than those who compared themselves to subordinates. That same year, Robert K. Merton (1949:42) used the theory of relative deprivation to describe self-appraisals that people make through the process of comparing themselves with others who they perceive as comparable or equal to them in some way, yet who are better off than they are in another way.

Social comparison is implicit in relative deprivation theory, but social comparison theory was not proposed until a decade later as an understanding of the way that individuals define themselves and reduce identity uncertainty by comparing themselves with others (Festinger 1959). The directionality component of social comparison theory aligns closely with relative deprivation. The basic idea is that when individuals make downward social comparisons (Willis 1981), or compare themselves with those perceived to be worse off than they are, they have a

positive emotional response and feel better about themselves (Gibbons 1986). On the other hand, when individuals make upward comparisons, or compare themselves with those they perceive to be better off than themselves, this often generates a negative emotional response and they feel worse about themselves (Tessar, Miller, and Moore 1988). In the latter situation, individuals are relatively deprived.

Sociologists generally use the theory of relative deprivation to describe any type of resource deficit (and the resource can be tangible or non-tangible) relative to reference individuals (Merton 1968) or a reference group (Hyman 1942; Kelley 1952). Many scholars have studied relative deprivation in regard to economic or SES circumstances (see, for example, Bernburg, Thorlindsson, and Sigfusdottir 2009; Podder 1996; Pedersen 2004). However, this theory has a history of being used to describe any type of perceived relative deficits ranging from preferential selection (see, for example, Singer 1992) to achievement outcomes (see, for example, Mark and Folger 1984) and even the past (Folger 1986).

In 1959, sociologist James A. Davis proposed the term “relative gratification” to describe the opposite of relative deprivation whereby comparisons occur with others who are perceived to be worse off, aligning with downward social comparisons (Willis 1981) which are described below. While this idea was introduced a half-century ago, it has only recently gained popularity in social psychological studies that examine the cognitive experience of holding racial prejudices towards others (see, for example, Gatto, Guimond, and Dambrun 2018).

Social movement scholars have used relative deprivation to examine social movement emergence (e.g., Gurr, 1969, 1970; Feierabend et al., 1969) or individual participation in movements (e.g., Bowen et al., 1968; Pinard, Kirk, and von Eschen, 1969; Searles and Williams, 1962). I use relative deprivation to examine the emergence of protest strikes. This is especially

useful because it provides an understanding of how experiences of relative deprivation in particular locations lead to protest strike emergence.

Social movement relative deprivation studies take two primary methodological forms: historical case study analyses or multivariate analyses of societal or individual data. Aberle's (1966) historical anthropology book, for example, explains the Peyote movement in the Navajo nation as a response to relative deprivation in material possessions. Other historical case-study analyses have been presented by Davies (1969) who, for example, uses relative deprivation to explain historical political violence resulting from a gap between what people have and what they want. Numerous other researchers use multivariate quantitative analyses and extant quantitative research (primarily from the 1960s and 1970s) is vast. For example, Bowen et al. (1968) use survey data to understand how relative deprivation with regard to socioeconomic status impact protest orientation. Similarly, Crawford and Naditch (1970) use survey data to understand how relative deprivation may have led to the Detroit riot. (For more examples, see Feierabend et al. 1969; Gurr 1969; Gurr 1970, and more recently Foster and Matheson 1995). Geschwender and Singer (1970) use interviews with prisoners as their source of data but do not report on the narratives of their participants. Instead, they simply draw upon demographic characteristics, e.g., age, employment, as descriptive statistics to understand ways in which relative deprivation led to protest. A dearth of qualitative research linking the narratives of individuals to protest is apparent in relative deprivation literature. My study fills this gap.

Like other classical theories, relative deprivation gained popularity in the social movement literature until the 1970s. Relative deprivation received criticisms similar to other classical theories of movement emergence (e.g., it is focused too much on irrationality and volatility of individuals, relative deprivation is a constant grievance, etc.) as described above and

also specific criticisms. Some specific criticisms, for example, are the aforementioned study by Bowen et al. which was criticized for using random samples and no controls and, similarly, Crawford and Naditch's study was criticized for only using data from those living in riot-stricken areas without considering those living in other communities (Gurney and Tierney 1982). Further, studies (e.g., Lauer, 1972; Nelson, 1970; Orum, 1972) disproved quantitative relative deprivation studies arguing that a lack of specificity in operationalization of variables resulted in inaccurate causality claims. Additionally, historical case studies such as those described by Aberle (1966) and Davies (1969) have been criticized for unconvincing arguments (Voget 1986; Snyder and Tilly 1972).

Overall, relative deprivation has been criticized for failing to adequately link psychological and societal conditions with the action component (Gurney and Tierney 1982). Qualitative research centering on the narratives of individuals, especially those with a broad understanding of the emergence of local strikes like the teacher leaders in my study, is a useful way to address these criticisms. This type of research is particularly useful because it allows for an understanding, through the words of those with first-hand experiences, of the interplay between societal and psychological conditions and how this leads to collective action.

Unlike structural strain and quotidian disruption, relative deprivation has not seen a resurgence in empirical social movement literature, although it has, as described above, been used in recent decades in social-psychological studies in the tradition of Merton (1947) (e.g., Bernburg, Thorlindsson, and Sigfusdottir 2009; Gatto, Guimond, and Dambrun 2018; Podder 1996; Pedersen 2004). Perhaps the closest connection of social movement scholars' classical usage of relative deprivation in contemporary literature lies in a couple of quantitative European studies in psychology and political science that use relative deprivation as a theory to understand

the voting and political engagement of individuals (e.g., Grasso et al. 2019; Urbanska and Guimond 2018), and, even more relevant, the aforementioned 1995 quantitative Canadian psychology study analyzing relative deprivation to predict women's rights activism. While all of these more recent studies help in the endeavor to understand that relative deprivation may indeed be connected to political participation and/or activism, as the studies described before, they all use quantitative methods and are, thus, unable to link narratives of relative deprivation with actual participation in activism. Further, they all examine comparisons between groups but do not consider comparisons to the past. My study uses qualitative methods based on the narratives of relative deprivation described by teacher leaders of protest strikes. It also not only examines comparisons between groups, but also across time.

Relative deprivation is highly visible with teachers expressing feelings of injustice when comparing salaries and funding levels with other states. Many studies and articles have been circulated about the salary rankings of teachers by state (e.g., Hunting, Reilly, Whitsett, Biggs, Garcia, and Hart 2017; Sestric 2018). In each of these, the rankings of many of the strike locations, especially those strikes which were large-scale and occurred in the first wave of strikes in 2018, consistently land toward the bottom of the list. For example, one study on teacher salary finds that West Virginia ranks 44th out of 50, Arizona ranks 45th, North Carolina ranks 46th, and Oklahoma ranks 49th (Iasevoli 2018), and a study by the Morrison Institute finds that Arizona elementary school teachers rank 50th in the nation (Hunting et al. 2017) with regard to salary adjusted for inflation. The widespread sharing of this information on social media may have contributed to the intensity of the social-comparison process eliciting group relative deprivation in this regard. A quick search of public Facebook posts with the topic "teacher salaries by state" yields a seemingly endless number of posts, many of which have been shared hundreds or even

thousands of times (Facebook 2018). The prevalence of this type of relative deprivation was common in the frames used on protest signs during the teacher strikes (Brandes 2018; Cano, White and Altavena 2018; Weiner 2018) whereby teachers expressed the injustices they felt through phrases such as "49th is not OK" (Figure 1).

Teachers may also compare themselves with non-teachers. For example, teachers may compare themselves with professionals who have the same level of education. Depending on the level of students taught, teachers' salaries range between 55% and 59% of the average salaries of similarly educated workers (OECD 2017). Teachers may also compare other benefits with other workers. Insurance costs, for instance, were frequently cited in news media as reasons for striking. Teachers' insurance premiums have increased dramatically over the last decade and, compared with other state employees, teachers pay about $1,500 more in insurance premiums than these other state employees (Mulhere 2018). In fact, in 2017, teachers paid an average of $585.71 per month in health insurance costs which amounts to more than $7,000 a year (Acosta and Wiatrowski 2017), a 25.4% increase from 2008 (Chao and Hall 2008). Thus, while teachers' salaries adjusted for inflation have gone down over the last decade in approximately 39 states, insurance costs have increased (Mulhere 2018). While protesting with her sons in West Virginia, ninth-grade science teacher, Melissa Whitener, expressed her frustration over this fact in a CNN article stating:

> It's a big problem when it costs more than you make to get health insurance…Nobody expects to get rich when you're teaching. But when I graduated college, my thought was, 'you know what, I'm never going to get rich, but I'll have good benefits,' and that's not true anymore. So, at some point you've got to stop letting bullies run over you, and I think that's what we're doing now (Jorgensen and Sandoval 2018).

On NPR, Oklahoman high-school English teacher, Larry Cagle, stated angrily, “I'm 54 years old and my paycheck is $1,980 [a month]. I can't afford f****** health insurance" (Kamenentz and Lombardo 2018).

Much of this frustration of teachers in comparison with similarly-educated professionals relates to teachers feeling as though they are not treated as professionals, especially when making comparisons to other professions, Freidson (1991) describes two underlying aspects of professionalism: 1) Professional work is specialized and inaccessible to those who do not possess the requisite experience and training and 2) Professional work cannot be standardized. Both of these aspects of teaching have been under assault often to the devaluation of and misunderstanding of the teaching role. In fact, teaching, in comparison with other professions, is highly devalued. This is often attributed to the antiquated notion that teaching is “women’s work” and centered around caring for children (Hartmann 1979; Hollbrook 1991). While teachers are highly-trained professionals that possess much expertise often due to extensive experience, as will be described below, their experience and training is not valued. Further, there have been numerous attempts to standardize the teaching role which has made teachers feel as though they have deteriorating autonomy in the classroom. The decreasing autonomy of teachers over time has been documented in the literature dating back to at least the mid-1980s. Peterson (1987) linked this decrease in autonomy to increasing computerization and overreliance on data.

While teachers often described autonomy in comparison with other professionals, perhaps more frequently, they described a decline in autonomy in comparison to the past. In fact, relative deprivation can also occur in comparison to the past (Folger 1986). Veteran teachers who were accustomed to better teaching conditions in the earlier years of their careers may make the decision to strike based on comparing the present with this past, before the recession, for

example. Educational spending grew consistently until about 2009 when it fell sharply and, as described above, has not yet recovered to pre-recession levels (National Center for Education Statistics 2017). Arizona teachers, for example, pointed out in their list of demands that “Arizona schools are over one-billion dollars below 2008 funding levels” (Buffon 2018). Relative deprivation stemming from comparisons to the past is also visible in the quote by West Virginia teacher, Whitener, when she described how she used to have good benefits but “that's not true anymore” (Jorgensen and Sandoval 2018) and in news reports described above that mention how teacher salary has declined over time while adjusting for inflation as benefits have diminished (Mulhere 2018). In fact, four of the five top states where salary between 2000 and 2017 has declined the most (between 10 and 15 percent) saw multiple-district or statewide teacher strikes in recent years (Abamu 2018).

News reports of activism and the signs carried by teachers make it seem as though relative deprivation both in comparison to others and in comparison to the past is important in understanding the emergence of teacher protests strikes across the nation in 2018 and 2019. My study explains and unpacks the role of relative deprivation in the emergence of these protest strikes, revitalizing its use in social movement studies. It does this through data that is useful in understanding this phenomenon and overcomes many of the aforementioned challenges and criticisms of prior relative deprivation studies. In particular, I use in-depth semi-structured interviews that draw on the narratives of teacher leaders who have a first-hand understanding of the relationship between relative deprivation and their activism.

Quotidian Disruption Theory

Another theory of protest emergence that centers on grievances concerns quotidian disruption. The quotidian, as Snow et al. (1998) tell us, is the everyday lived experience of individuals. Actual or impending change to the quotidian is referred to as quotidian disruption (Snow et al. 1998). Quotidian disruption theory is an extension of breakdown theory which centered on suddenly-imposed grievances leading to activism (Walsh 1988). However, quotidian disruption theory is less concerned about the suddenness of the grievance and more concerned about the way in which daily-life is impacted, whether that be instantaneously or over time (Snow et al. 1998). `

Smelser argues that "strain at any level of any component will show up first at the lower, more operative levels" such as in the inability to "perform tasks, participate in family life, and so on" (1962:49). Thus, it is imperative to pay attention to the lived experiences of teachers and the grievances they put forth with regard to quotidian disruption.

I argue, and illustrate in Figure 3, that large-scale structural strain manifests in the daily lived experiences of teachers as a disruption of the quotidian or everyday routines of daily life (Snow et al. 1998). Routines of teachers were disrupted both at work and at home due to structural changes that resulted in decreased funding to K-12 public education. The following discussions will describe these experiences of quotidian disruptions experienced by teachers at home and work.

At Home

The critical lack of funding allocated to traditional public schools (and teachers within these schools) has created a situation where many teachers feel that their basic ability to survive

and/or provide for their families is disrupted. Teachers often feel as though they are unable to subsist on their teaching salaries alone any more. Because of this, many teachers must take second jobs to make ends meet (Stauss 2016). In fact, for new teachers in approximately a quarter of large school districts, renting a one-bedroom apartment is not financially feasible (National Council on Teacher Quality; NCTQ 2017), and CNN found that it is not uncommon for teachers to work up to six jobs, subsist near the poverty level, and rely on food-bank assistance (Yan and Stix 2018). Further, in 30 out of 50 states, teachers do not make a living wage and the top three states (Colorado, Virginia, and Arizona) with the largest gap between a living wage and teachers' salaries all saw large-scale teachers strikes (Katz et al. 2018). Taking a second job is an example of quotidian disruption.

The narrative of not being able to survive any longer on a teaching salary or continue to live in the area where they teach is commonly cited in news media that interviewed striking teachers. Cristopher Bautista, a ninth grade English teacher in Oakland explained: "I can't afford to live in Oakland; if you want to be a teacher, you have to make sacrifices." Some sacrifices made by Bautista include a daily commute of almost 60 miles and a second job at Starbucks (Ho and Wong 2019). Relatedly, when *The New York Times* asked why West Virginia high-school English teacher, Katie Endicott, decided to strike she said:

> "I take care of the bills in my family and knew I can't afford it, I can't. I have two children, I live paycheck to paycheck. When I realized that they were taking hundreds of dollars [for increases in insurance costs] and then they tried to tell me they were giving me a pay raise of 1 percent, I knew I can't just sit back. I can't be complacent, something has to change (Bidgood 2018).

Justin McLellan, a former history teacher who participated in walk-outs in Arizona, stated that he was quitting after 15 years of teaching after being offered a salary of $39,000 to teach his 16th year, only $6,000 more than his starting salary. When CNN asked why he was quitting he said:

"I was (doing) three jobs, and the job that was the least productive for my family was the job (teaching) I had the most passion for. So, it's not about my wants, it's more about my family's needs at this point" (Hanna and Allen 2018). Like the mother in the above example, it is clear that the financial difficulty of working as a teacher affected this individual's ability to provide for his family in his father role. Subsistence-based grievances were also ubiquitous in the signs that teachers carried at locations of protest. Figure 4 provides examples of these subsistence-grievance messages (Franklin 2018; Jamieson 2018b; Ogrochi 2018). The inability to no longer subsist on a teacher salary is a disruption to the quotidian at home.

At Work

Poor working conditions in schools as a result of a lack of funding often results in a disruption to the quotidian making it no longer possible to continue performing the teacher role at an optimal level. This experience of poor, unsustainable working conditions is often cited as a catalyst for recent teacher action (Sarisohn 2018). Various media articles reported on teachers complaining of mold, wasps' nests, leaky ceilings (one Oklahoma school gym was so leaky that volleyball games get rained out), broken chairs and desks, crumbling textbooks, and carpet held together by duct tape (Hendry and Pasquantonio 2018; Zatino 2018). Further, instructional resources in the classroom are often so decrepit and outdated that many teachers report spending thousands of dollars out of pocket to get what their students need (Zdanowicz and Williams 2018), or are left using inadequate materials that disable their ability to teach at the highest level.

Teachers made this experience of a disrupted quotidian in their workplaces apparent both in their statements describing why they walked out of the classroom and also on their protest signs (see Figure 4). Cathy Nowicki, a middle-school math teacher in Arizona told *Mic* that the

way she and her colleagues currently move through their school building reminds her of an Indiana Jones movie. She stated:

> "We move through the halls to step on cockroaches, and in the summer, we remove caterpillars. Today, we had one classroom that had cockroaches coming from the ceiling, and in another classroom, there is a leak coming from the ceiling. How are we supposed to teach our kids in rooms that are like this?" (Provenzano 2018).

Oklahoma elementary school teacher, Misti Vann, after detailing her experience through a long list of issues she experiences daily due to a lack of funding, summed it up by saying, "My classroom, my books are falling apart" (Balingit 2018). Other teachers held signs to protest a lack of basic supplies (like paper) and outdated textbooks (Figure 4). A popular refrain among striking teachers was "teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions" (Bryen 2018; Kordmany 2018). With this they emphasized the message that both students and teachers experience the effects of inadequate education funding. Books falling apart, cockroach infestations, and leaky ceilings are all example of disruption to the quotidian at work.

However, these disruptions and those described in the above section also connect to relative deprivation when teachers make comparisons to the past, as they do when they discuss how they used to be able to survive on a teacher salary or how they worked work in an adequate environment, or when they are making comparisons to other workers who are presently able to survive on their salaries or work in adequate environments. And, I find in my analysis that these connections between relative deprivation and quotidian disruption are particularly important in generating grievances that led to protest strikes.

Section Summary

So far, I have described the theoretical utility of structural strain, relative deprivation disruptions to the quotidian, and relative deprivation in understanding grievances that may have

led to the unprecedented wave of 2018 and 2019 teacher protest strikes. I expect that all of these components were important for the protest strikes. Specifically, I argue that structural strain led to relative deprivation and quotidian disruption which elicited protest strikes. I find that when relative deprivation was directly linked to quotidian disruption in the lived experiences of teachers it functioned as a grievance leading to collective action. However, when this link was not as direct, strong, or salient in the daily lives of teachers, relative deprivation was strategically framed by teacher leaders to generate grievances and motivate teachers to take part in the activism. Framing will be discussed in the following section.

Framing Theory

The idea of framing was originally put forth by Goffman (1974:11) defined broadly as a presented definition of the situation built through a subjective involvement with it. Very important to Goffman's conceptualization of framing is the way in which people understand the situations in which they find themselves. According to him, framing allows people to understand, interpret, and categorize occurrences both within their immediate location and also in society generally (Goffman 1974:21).

Since movement actors are also concerned with how people interpret the ideas they put forth, it makes sense that framing has been incorporated into social movement theory and has now become a fundamental part of social movement research (Snow et al. 2014). However, social movement scholars, unlike Goffman, are concerned about the action component. Thus, Goffman's idea of framing has been adopted and extended to include a focus on the role in which framing plays in the mobilization of potential actors. Social movement framing theory is generally understood as the way in which social movement organizations put forth their issues and beliefs in order to inspire action (Benford and Snow 2000).

The framing process allows movement actors to create a definition of the situation which will inspire action. Occurrences are interpreted, simplified, condensed, and made meaningful in strategic ways in order not only to mobilize potential constituents, but also to increase support or garner sympathy of other groups, and also subdue prospective or existing antagonists (Snow and Benford 1998:198), which is important in the process of attracting participants (Hewitt and McCammon 2004). The strategic interplay between the situational environment in which the movement exists and the movement itself is referred to as "strategic framing." (McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith 2004). Strategy is defined as activists' "choices about claims, issues, allies, frames, identity and presentation of self, resources, and tactics" (Meyer and Staggenborg 2012). These choices are important since framing builds off the idea that mobilization is not the automatic reaction to a grievance but, rather, that social movement leaders, in this case teacher leaders, work hard to strategically assign meaning to situations and market their campaign to mobilize participants (Snow and Benford 1988) or shape public debates (McCammon 2012:12). Thus, framing can be envisioned as the marketing task of social movements due to the strategic way in which ideas, occurrences, viewpoints, and values are promoted with regard to the environment in which they exist (Snow and Byrd 2007).

When receiving the frames, potential participants are able to interpret the situation in multiple ways and these interpretations determine whether one will mobilize (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986: 476; Ketelaars 2016). The concept of frame alignment or "the linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary" (Snow et al. 1986: 464) links framing back to a social-psychological perspective (Snow et al. 1986), a linkage also found to be key for individual participation in

movements by Klandersman (1984). The social-psychological perspective is important because individuals and groups must be mentally connected to a movement and be convinced, through the framing process, that this movement is important to be a part of which is key for frame resonance and alignment.

Frame resonance generally refers to the extent to which frames resonate with people. Ketelaars argues that there is actually little difference between the concepts of frame resonance and alignment but "that frame resonance is a frame attribute, as in some frames resonating more than others, while frame alignment can be attributed to something individuals do, as in someone aligning with a certain frame or not" (2016). Both of these attributes are positively correlated with one another. As frame alignment increases, so does frame resonance (Ketelaars 2016). Regardless, frames must resonate in order for groups to be convinced of the movement's importance.

So what causes frame resonance? According to Snow et al. (1986), there are four types of occurrences which build frame resonance allowing increased alignment of an individual or group with frames. These include frame bridging, frame extension, frame transformation, and frame amplification.

Frame bridging occurs when two fundamentally unrelated, yet ideologically aligned frames are strategically linked (Snow et al. 1986:467). A purpose of this is to mobilize those who share similar issues but do not share an organized base. Sano has found this to be very important with the Catholic Teacher's Union of New Jersey whereby this Union works hard to align their grievances with Catholic social teachings, morality, and church doctrine (Sano 2009:92). This allowed for the alignment of Catholic parishioners with union frames.

Frame extension, like frame bridging, seeks to bring in those existing outside of the movement (Snow et al.1986:469). However, this process does so through the expansion of current frames to encompass the viewpoints, opinions, or feelings of those on the periphery. Frame extension can be seen within this wave of teacher activism when teacher leaders expand their frames to, not only include teacher grievances, but also student issues as well. If teachers present their frames as only being self-interested, such as hoping for an increase in salary or better working conditions, this limits those who care about their grievances. However, when their frames are expanded to include ways in which union actions benefit students, such as increased technology in the classroom or healthy school lunches, more people become interested in the movement, referring back to the aforementioned adage that was extremely popular on teachers' protest signs (see Figure 4), "teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions" (Bryen 2018; Kordmany 2018).

Frame transformation occurs when a frame is completely transformed into something new. While this sometimes occurs when the goals of a movement shift, it also is important, at times, when new understandings are necessary to gain support (Snow et al. 1986). This can be seen when teachers shift their frames completely from being teacher-centric to student-centric.

Finally, frame amplification is utilized to bolster support and alignment with a movement. Frame amplification specifically refers to the "clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem, or set of ideas" (Snow et al. 1986:469). Many interpretive frames of a particular social movement are focused around a particular problem. This is a common strategy utilized to increase the resonance of a frame and individual's or group's alignment with a frame. This is the way in which relative-deprivation

focused frames were used by teacher leaders. Relative deprivation was amplified through framing by teacher leaders.

There are two main frame amplification strategies utilized by social movement organizations. The first is value amplification which entails the pointing out and making important, within a frame, particular values which are deemed vital to potential supporters (Snow et al. 1986:469). Values can also take the form of end-goals or gains that a social movement organization hopes to attain. "Student success" is a form of value amplification which is very visible on the NEA homepage (2017).

Belief amplification is the second type of process relevant to frame amplification. Beliefs can be conceived as ideological components which either aid or impede the attainment of particular goals (or movement values) (Snow et al. 1986:470). Belief amplification is the process of making one or more of these ideational elements especially salient to a movement frame.[4]

Belief amplification often aligns well with the three "core-framing tasks" (Snow and Benford 1988). These tasks include: 1) diagnostic framing which identifies the issue and assigns

[4] Snow et al. (1986:470) identified five prevalent types of beliefs visible in the movement literature: 1) issue seriousness (Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina 1982; McAdam 1982/2010; Piven and Cloward 1977; Turner 1969); 2) blame targets or causality (Ferree and Miller 1985; Piven and Cloward 1977; Zurcher and Snow 1981); stereotypes of adversaries (Shibutani 1970; Turner and Killian 1972); effectiveness of action or chances of change (Klandermans 1984; Oberschall 1980; Olson 1965; Piven and Cloward 1977); and the requirement of "standing up" (Fireman and Gamson 1979; Oliver 1984; Piven and Cloward 1977).

blame. This aligns with the second type of belief which blames targets or the source of the problem. 2) prognostic framing which proposes solutions to the problems at hand. This frequently aligns with beliefs of effectiveness since solutions or tactics are generally not proposed without the idea that they will succeed. 3) motivational framing which motivates individuals to participate, often through a "call to arms". This aligns with the fifth prevalent type of belief since it persuades individuals to stand up. This can also be done through a retrieval of core values as a persuading mechanism, thus aligning with value amplification. Snow argues that when the three core framing tasks are done successfully, frame alignment occurs (1988). Particularly, the diagnostic and prognostic framing tasks attempt to achieve consensus mobilization and the motivational framing task attempts to catalyze action. It is clear, then, that both core-framing tasks and frame alignment are necessary for protest emergence.

The relative-deprivation focused frames used by teacher leaders served each of these core framing tasks. They diagnosed the problem of injustice with regard to being relatively deprived to others or to the past, they proposed a solution of equity among teachers across location, similarly educated professionals, or to the past with regard to various factors returning to the way they once were. And, perhaps most importantly, their purpose, according to teacher leaders, as will be described below was motivational, with the overarching goal of persuading teachers to stand up and take part in the movement. The goal was to build solidarity so that impactful protest events could materialize.

Solidarity can be defined as "the ability of actors to recognize others and to be recognized, as belonging to the same social unit" (Melucci 1996). Solidarity is often built through shared struggle (Featherstone 2012). Solidarity is necessary for protest to emerge and persist (Gamson 1995; Melucci 1985; Taylor and Whittier 1992). As will be described further

below, teacher leaders built solidarity locally which allowed for protests to emerge and teachers felt solidarity with teachers across the nation, identifying similar struggles that all teachers share. This led to a sense of feeling as though teachers were "all in it together," not only contributing to protest events, but also the larger movement.

Framing served various important roles in the teacher activism of focus. Frames were directed at various groups such as teachers (as described above), lawmakers, parents, and the general public, etc. In this dissertation, I will focus on those frames that were directed at teachers with the goal of bringing teachers on board with activism and building solidarity. Frames centering on relative deprivation were often created by teacher leaders with this focus for teachers and described repeatedly in the narratives of my participants. Thus, framing is another important theoretical component of this dissertation. I view framing as a key mechanism that allowed various forms of relative deprivation to generate protest strikes. This aligns with Klandersman's assertion that relative deprivation among individuals does not automatically portend group agreement around the goals of the movement with regard to the way that feelings of relative deprivation can be eased (Klandersman 1984). Thus, campaigns are necessary that make the situation clear in relation to relative deprivation and any potential relief the activism may bring (Klandersman 1984; Schwartz, 1988). In the narratives of teacher leaders, I saw a concerted effort to do this by strategically framing relative deprivation in ways to build consensus and collective grievances with the goal of bringing teachers on board. To my knowledge, social movement research has not yet examined the connection between framing and relative deprivation leading to mobilization. The narratives of my participants provide insight into the ways in which relative-deprivation focused framing was utilized in the contemporary wave of teacher strikes.

CONCLUSION

In sum, there are numerous theories of movement emergence that may be important to the teacher strike wave of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. This dissertation will focus on relative deprivation and framing as related to relative deprivation because of the prevalence of narratives related to these theories in my interviews and the importance placed on them by teacher leaders. However, I will offer preliminary analyses of other theories and other types of effective framing in Chapter 7 alongside preliminary thoughts of how these theories operated together to bring about these protest strikes.

Chapter 3: Data and Methods

In order to analyze how teachers described relative deprivation and its role in contemporary teacher protest strikes, I used qualitative data and methods. In this chapter I will outline the data and methods I used for my project. First, I will discuss my data and then my analytical process.

DATA

I draw on 35 semi-structured phone or voice-only Zoom interviews with teachers who were also leaders in their local strikes in my geographic areas of focus. I chose to focus on the Western and Southern regions of the contiguous United States because all teacher strikes except for three single-district strikes (two in New Jersey and one in Illinois) occurred in school districts within these regions (as designated by the US Census, see Figure 6). I also focus on only those teacher leaders involved in the activism within my timeframe of focus: the school years of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, and, more specifically the spring 2018, fall 2018, and spring 2019 semesters because the strikes occurred during these periods (there were no known public-school teacher strikes in 2017; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019).

Some reasons why interview data are useful for my study are because they provide "rich descriptions of complex phenomena" (Sofaer 1999), allow for understanding occurrences through the experiences and interpretations of actors (Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey 2016; Sofaer 1999), and permit researchers to move towards explanations (Sofaer 1999). Interview data are an especially useful type of data for my project because the narratives of teacher leaders provide insight into the strikes through descriptions why the strikes occurred,

their experiences leading the activism, and their understanding of the motivations of non-teacher leader participants. This allows for theorizing about reasons why these protest strikes occurred. Qualitative interview data is particularly useful in my project in understanding the ways in which relative deprivation led to strikes. I can learn about the motivations of the participants and leaders through the words of leaders and whether relative deprivation led to protest strike emergence. This allows me to make direct connections, through the words of participants, between relative deprivation and protest strike emergence.

While I had planned to travel to interview teachers in person, I ended up conducting voice-only interviews (via phone/Google Voice and Zoom) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Phone interviews are limited in the fact that nonverbal communication is not possible. This missing visual communication can make the interview process less personal and subtle cues may be missed (Vogl 2013). Further, there were sometimes technical difficulties or a lack of ability to concentrate due to distractions within the environment in which interviewees were situated that affected the interview process. For example, one of my participants conducted the interview outside and her phone got too hot and died. Another interviewee tried to conduct the interview in a crowded and noisy bar. In both cases, we needed to reschedule a time to continue our interview.

I chose to interview teacher leaders because, given their broad interaction with teachers in their district, they were able to offer insights into the typical teacher's motivation for striking, information about how strikes were organized, and knowledge about why strikes occurred where and when they did. I identified teacher leaders by examining news articles connected to the protest strikes in the particular geographic areas of focus. I then prepared an initial list of

approximately 50 teacher leaders who I wanted to interview. This list eventually grew to 82 potential interviewees as I continued to read about the strikes.

Once I had my initial list of potential interviewees, I prepared my recruitment email and interview protocol (both of which are included in the Appendix and will be described in detail further below) and applied for Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. IRB categorized my study as exempt in April 2020. At that time, I began the process of recruiting teacher leaders. I conducted my first interviews for this project in May 2020 and continued this process through July 2021.

Of my initial list of 82 interviewees, I attempted to contact 72 of these teacher leaders at least one time and up to five times. I did not contact some of the potential interviewees due to difficulty finding their email addresses. I contacted my potential interviewees via their school emails or contact forms. If I learned that they were no longer teaching, I contacted teachers through an alternate email or Facebook.

My recruitment email is included in Appendix C. In this email, I briefly describe my study and method of interviewing (via phone or voice-only Zoom). I also make it clear that I invite both former and current teachers to participate since some of my interviewees were no longer teaching. I then mention that the interviews would be confidential and anonymous and that participants' names, states, schools, and districts would not be revealed. I go on to express my desire to record the interview, but also let them know that, if they would rather I not record, then I would simply take handwritten notes. After that, I let participants know approximately how long I expected the interviews to take, but also that I could work with any amount of time they were willing to provide. Further, I told them they would be provided with a $20 gift card of their choice as a token of appreciation. After that, I acknowledge their time was very valuable

and how busy teachers are, especially during the unprecedented pandemic of COVID-19 within which I was recruiting, but that I hoped they may be able to carve out a bit of time to help me with my research. I also mention my prior six-year career as a K-12 public school teacher. I believe that my background helped me gain access to participants. Some participants stated that they appreciated a former teacher was doing this work.[5]

I gave the participants various options to express their interest in participating or ask questions about the study: 1) by replying directly to the email, 2) sending an email from another email address to me or 3) by calling/texting my cell phone. I chose to give these various options because I know that some school districts threaten to monitor the emails of teachers and that they may not want to respond in the way in which I contacted them.[6] Teachers responded in each of the ways that I provided: I received some direct emails back from school email addresses, some emails sent from other addresses, some phone calls, and some texts.

Of the 72 teacher leaders I contacted, 36 expressed their interest in participating. For the study, I completed 35 interviews. Thus, my response rate was around 50% which is a good response rate for email recruitment. In fact, average email recruitment response rates have not reached above 50% since the 1990s (Muños-Leiva 2010; Saleh and Bista 2017) due to the wide incorporation of email filters, including anti-spamming software (which may be especially

[5] I noticed a lot of distrust among participants about research about teachers. I think this is potentially due to the aforementioned decline in autonomy due to research-based ideas put forth by those who have spent little or no time in the classroom.

[6] This decision came from personal experience as a teacher in schools who threatened monitoring emails and my avoidance of using school emails for anything non-work related.

prevalent in schools). Fatigue may also be a factor in lowering the response rate, due to numerous unsolicited messages and excessive research invitations via email generally and particularly for teachers. Research conducted on K-12 school systems is prevalent in schools[7] and many of my participants expressed disdain for this research (Couper, Kapteyn, Schonlau, and Winter 2007; Petrovčič et al. 2016; Veen et al. 2016).

The largest challenge in this process was getting teachers to reply to my initial email and, for some, getting the actual interview scheduled once the agreement to participate was made. I think both of these difficulties were simply the result of how busy teachers are and, perhaps, the high level of research invitations that teachers receive. I also got some returned emails due to invalid addresses, perhaps because the teacher no longer worked in the school. Thus, I suspect some of those who did not respond may not have ever received my message, but I do not think this biased my results as I was still able to meet my recruitment goals. In order to adequately understand how each protest strike emerged, my goal was to interview at least one teacher leader from each small-scale (single district) strike and at least two teacher leaders from each large-scale strike (multiple district or statewide). I was able to meet these goals.

Throughout the recruitment process, I followed the procedure of identifying teacher leaders in the media and then contacting them. I had planned to use a snowball sampling approach. However, I did not pursue this because of my success in obtaining teacher leaders to interview through the process I had set forth. There was one unsolicited instance of snowball sampling whereby I emailed a recruitment email to someone and they copied their friend,

[7] I have never received more invitations to participate in research than during my six years of K-12 teaching.

another teacher leader in another area, on their response because they suspected that they might also be interested in participating. I did recruit this participant, but they were the only person that was recruited in a different way than the procedure that I described above.[8]

I interviewed 16 participants (45.7%) who worked in school districts in the Southern region of the United States (see Figure 6) and 19 participants (54.2%) who worked in the Western United States. I interviewed 10 participants (28.6%) who led single-district strikes; 14 participants (40.0%) who led multiple-district strikes; and 11 participants (31.4%) who led statewide strikes. I interviewed 21 female (60.0%), 1 nonbinary (2.9%), and 13 male (37.1%) participants. Please see Table 1 for participant information. Because I situated the demographic questions at the end of the interview, I rarely got to them, so information about the demographics about my participants is limited.

In the interviews, I asked teachers to reflect back on the protest strike they led. Interviews were semi structured through an interview protocol, but allowed flexibility with the topics covered which gave the interviewee agency in deciding what to discuss (Creswell and Creswell 2017). Some topics discussed included main issues leading to the strike, experiencing and sharing emotions related to grievances, how teachers coordinated themselves to strike, support from others, influences of other strikes, comparisons with others and the past, and why the larger teacher social movement occurred when it did. I also asked demographic questions, but, given the positioning of these questions at the end of the interview, I did not always get to these. Please see Appendix B for my interview protocol. Due to the semi-structured nature of the

[8] A few other teachers mentioned other teacher leaders who might be good to interview in our conversation, but these teachers were already on my list of potential interviews.

interviews, I was rarely able to ask all of the questions listed in the protocol. Early in the interview process, I identified that teachers spoke at length about the topics that they were asked about which precluded me from asking many questions. Because of this, I identified one or two questions from each of the protocol sections to prioritize (these questions are bolded in the interview protocol included in Appendix B), but I let teachers lead the conversation in identifying topics and themes that were most salient to them and their local experience. My goal was to give teacher leaders as much freedom as possible in describing what led to the strikes to be able to best identify those themes that were most important to protest emergence.

I believe that my background as a teacher helped me establish rapport with participants during our conversations. At times in the interviews, I was also able to relate with teachers on certain topics such as being a teacher activist,[9] having a leaky classroom ceiling, purchasing my own computer copy paper, receiving low pay, completing traditional certification programs, teaching similar subjects, etc. I believe my ability to relate on certain topics further augmented rapport between myself and my interviewees. It was apparent that most, if not all, of the interviewees were engaged in the interview process and often talked much longer than the

[9] I was involved in various forms of activism in my career as a K-12 teacher, including attending and speaking at school board meetings, writing letters about grievances, and helping implement a property tax referendum that would have increased funding to my school. This referendum would have unfrozen teacher salaries (that, at that time, had been frozen for seven years) and eliminate pay-to-participate requirements for sport and extracurricular programs that disadvantaged students from lower-income families. I sometimes briefly talked about my activism and the failure of this referendum when relevant in interviews.

requested time. I was often told that it was nice to talk to someone who cared about the plight of teachers and the teachers repeatedly thanked me for doing the work that I was doing.

Pseudonyms are used for all participants and participants' states and school districts are purposefully not revealed in order to protect my participants' anonymity. Instead, I use Census regions of the United States (see Figure 6) as a way to provide some context for strike location. As mentioned previously, all participants worked in the Western and Southern regions of the United States (as designated by the US Census; see Figure 6) at the time of the strikes. Participants were invited to choose their own pseudonyms[10]. Again, please see Table 1 for more information about the participants in this study.

Participants were offered a $20 gift card of their choice as a token of gratitude for their participation in this study. The interviews ranged in length from 45 to 98 minutes. All interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed by Rev.

DATA ANALYSIS

I began my study with extensive knowledge of social movement theory and developed my interview protocol from a deductive approach in alignment with what I knew about protest emergence. However, there are inductive elements of my study since I used a phenomenological approach which was aimed at understanding the lived experiences of participants (Moustakas 1994).

[10] All of the participants' choices were honored unless I interviewed another participant with the same actual first name as a pseudonym. In these cases, I changed the pseudonym to avoid confusion and the possibility of identification.

Again, my interview protocol was created in alignment with extant protest emergence theories. In my interview protocol (Appendix B), the first set of questions align with grievance-based theories of movement emergence, my second set of questions align with resource mobilization literature, my third set of questions align with political opportunity, my fourth set of questions align with diffusion theory, my fifth set of questions align with social comparison and relative deprivation theories and my final set of questions align with broader theories of movement emergence. I also made sense of the emergent themes elicited from these interviews by drawing on existing scholarship to contextualize my understanding. This method informed my data analysis process by foregrounding the perceptions and meaning-making processes of my participants with respect to their lived experiences (Strauss and Corbin 1998) through a lens informed by extant theory.

Armed with the narratives of teachers and extant relevant social movement theory, I then followed Huberman and Miles' (1994) approach to qualitative data analysis by freely considering the narratives as a way to generate meaning from the data. To do this, I used ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software platform, to open code all of the interviews. By open code, I mean that I read through the interviews and coded themes that stood out to me for the most part without using a specific coding architecture. However, and importantly, throughout this process, I was specifically looking for reasons behind the strikes since understanding the emergence of strikes was the overarching goal of my project. I followed Dey's (2003) approach to theme development whereby I noticed and recorded key patterns that developed from this open coding process which allowed me to identify those themes that were salient to my project. Through this process, I noticed the theme of relative deprivation arising as the most salient theme within the interviews. So, I then recoded the interviews, this time focusing

on specific categories connected with social comparison theory having to do with perceptions, messages, and experiences described by the participants with regard to social comparison and relative deprivation. Through this process, I was able to inductively determine the ways that respondents spoke about relative deprivation and the utility of this theoretical concept in the emergence of the strikes of focus.

I found that teachers described experiencing various forms of relative deprivation to others and to the past. These comparisons identified inequities faced by teachers. I also find that the role of relative deprivation in generating contemporary teacher protest strikes varies by type of relative deprivation. My findings will be further elucidated in the following chapters.

Chapter 4: Relatively Deprived Teachers: How Social Comparisons with Other Teachers and Similarly-Educated Professionals Reveal Inequities

This chapter demonstrates the ways in which teachers in the interviews described relative deprivation in comparison with others, both other teachers and other professionals. I choose to focus on relative deprivation in my analysis due to the prevalence of narratives related to relative deprivation in my data. Descriptions of relative deprivation arose both organically and also in response to my interview questions. In fact, I did not always have the opportunity to ask the relative deprivation questions given the time constraints on the interviews.[11] Nevertheless, narratives of at least one type of relative deprivation arose in every interview. Thus, 100% of my interviewees expressed experiencing relative deprivation to others and/or the past. In this and the following chapter (Chapter 5), I focus on relative deprivation to others. Chapter 6 then centers on relative deprivation to the past.[12] The present chapter describes ways in which teachers explained

[11] I let teachers lead the conversation in identifying topics and themes that were most salient to them and their local experience (see Chapter 3's discussion of this). My goal was to give teacher leaders as much freedom as possible in describing what led to the strikes to be able to best identify those themes that were most important to protest emergence.

[12] The current chapter focuses on giving an overview of the types of relative deprivation in comparison with others and key themes connected to these comparisons. The following two chapters focus on the way in which relative deprivation led to teacher protest strikes. I have chosen to not include relative deprivation to the past in this chapter because of the way that teacher leaders' descriptions of relative deprivation to the past were explained as inextricably connected to the activism. This connection was direct. Thus, separating the explanation of this

experiencing relative deprivation to others and the following chapter describes the connection between relative deprivation in comparison with others to the activism.

OVERVIEW

Teacher leaders described experiencing both relative deprivation in relation to others and to the past. When describing relative deprivation to others, teachers described comparisons to other teachers and to similarly-educated professionals. When making comparisons to other teachers, teachers made comparisons with teachers both near and far. When making comparisons with teachers nearby, teacher-leaders' described how teachers' lived experiences were affected due to deleterious effects of living near relatively-advantaged districts often due to the poaching of numerous teachers from their districts which disrupted their quotidian. They also demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the way their working conditions could be better, an understanding that grew from the proximity of these relatively advantaged districts and conversations with former colleagues who have moved to these districts. When making comparisons with teachers from afar, teachers recognized that they were relatively advantaged in some ways, but also relatively deprived in others. There was an overwhelming sense of solidarity with teachers across the nation. Teachers also made comparisons with similarly-educated

type of relative deprivation with the role it played in the activism did not make sense. So, I have chosen to keep all analysis of the narratives of relative deprivation to the past within Chapter 6. Relative deprivation in comparison with others, however, was much more complex and laden with variation than teacher leaders' descriptions of relative deprivation to the past. Therefore, I devote two chapters to comparisons with others.

professions and expressed that they were relatively deprived compared to these other professions. Teachers automatically linked this relative deprivation to sexism whereby they recognized that the reason for this relative deprivation was due to the feminized nature of the teaching profession.

Teachers also described relative deprivation to the past in relation to numerous aspects such as autonomy, salary (especially as adjusted for inflation), and course materials. As will be described in Chapter 6, they described this past deprivation to themselves personally and more generally to teachers in their district. It is important to recognize the ways in which teachers compare themselves with others because through understanding experiences of relative deprivation, it becomes possible to identify inequities that affect the lived experiences of teachers and, potentially, serve as grievances leading to collective action, which will be analyzed in Chapters 5 (in relation to others), and Chapter 6 (in relation to the past). However, this chapter will give a detailed overview of the ways in which relative deprivation in comparison with others arose in the interviews and the forms that these narratives took. First this chapter will describe the ways in which teachers describe relative deprivation with similarly-educated professionals and the link between this and sexist devaluing due to the profession being feminized. Second, this chapter will describe the ways in which teachers describe experiencing relative deprivation in relation to teachers in other states and nearby districts.

RELATIVE DEPRIVATION IN RELATION TO SIMILARLY-EDUCATED PROFESSIONALS

Teachers recognized that, indeed, they were relatively deprived compared to similarly-educated professionals, and they linked this to sexism whereby teachers were devalued because the profession is feminized. The first part of this section will describe the prevalent ways in

which teachers described experiencing relative deprivation in comparison to similarly-educated professionals and the second part of this section will highlight the ways in which teachers described these inequities as connected to sexist devaluing.

Ways in Which Relative Deprivation in Comparison to Similarly-Educated Professionals Identify Inequities

There were various grievances that arose when teachers expressed their relative deprivation to similarly-educated professionals. One of the main ones was doing more work and more types of work (including emotional labor) for less pay. The pay differential in comparison between teachers and similarly educated professionals also arose as a separate grievance. Related to pay and feeling as though their work was valued, was another grievance that centered on a lack of respect in comparison to similarly-educated professionals, and, similar to this, was a feeling as though even highly experienced teachers were not treated like experts in comparison with similarly-educated professionals.

Anne, a teacher-leader of a multiple-district strike in the West demonstrates the additional work that teachers do for less pay in comparison with similarly-educated professionals by stating:

> Teachers are paid less than similar professionals. Our contracts say we have a 40-hour workweek, but anybody who's been in teaching knows that that's ridiculous. We cart our papers to grade to our children's sporting events, and we sit in the stands and we grade, we go to family holidays and we grade, and we spend our summers taking professional development and planning for the next year. That can be all consuming. And then it's not just the instruction, it's the social and emotional needs that we have to attend to in our classrooms with our students.

Anne's statement shows that while teachers are paid less than similarly-educated professionals for a 40-hour workweek for 10 months a year, the actual work hours are much longer than what they are actually contracted for. Thus, teachers do much more unpaid labor than similarly-

educated professionals. This impedes on their lives outside of the normally-scheduled school day. These work hours prevent teachers from being fully present at their children's sporting events or family functions.

Further, teachers do much more uncompensated labor than similarly-educated professionals attending to the social and emotional needs of their students. Mike, a teacher leader of a multiple-district strike in the South also described unfair expectations of teachers compared with similarly-educated professionals describing the teacher role as "only 20% of your job is standing in front of kids" and then goes on to compare to the medical field stating "even though we have all this same amount of training and all this other stuff, doctors are not asked to be anything else but doctors during the day."

Many of these additional tasks were a result of structural underfunding that eliminated positions that were formerly paid such as school social workers, counselors, nurses, librarians, substitute teachers, crossing guards (as will be described by Ethan in Chapter 6) and teachers then had to take on these roles, often during times that were supposed to be set aside for them to prep classes and grade. Other forms of work that teachers had to take on were a result of structural assaults on autonomy, as will also be described in Chapter 6, requiring teachers to do more work to prove that they were actually doing a good job in the classroom such as continually entering data or attending additional, unnecessary, meetings. All of these additional tasks led teachers to having more work left to do at the end of the day, impeding on time they could be spending with their family, as described by Anne. This is a form of quotidian disruption because it disrupts the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers and their ability to successfully fulfill their roles both at work and at home.

Bettina, a teacher-leader in a statewide strike in the South, like Anne, also described the pay differential between teachers and similarly-educated professionals and then also describes feeling relatively deprived in terms of trust and respect. She stated:

> Obviously we're not paid what we would be in the private sector, but what I find most frustrating is that most of us have all this education and certificates and all this, and we get treated like we're a complete yahoo. You have to prove everything. That's what I see a huge difference in, is just the fact that we are not treated like professionals. We're not treated like experts, and it's just unbelievable, and I say that as someone with two undergraduate degrees, a master's degree, an endorsement and a National Board certification. And if you saw the way administration treats me in my building, you would think I was like a seventh grader who needed help finding the bathroom or something.

Bettina's statement shows that, indeed, teachers are relatively deprived in terms of salary but even more of her frustration lies in the fact that teachers, even with the high levels of education and overwhelming amount of credentials they possess, are not treated with respect. Janis, a teacher leader of a statewide strike in the South, who holds a doctorate degree, echoed this sentiment. She stated "I think we're incredibly undervalued particularly [to] educated individuals." She then goes on to describe how she thought that obtaining her doctorate in education would garner some respect but, even with this marker of expertise, she still felt incredibly devalued. She described how, if given the opportunity, she would not get her doctorate again.

Like Bettina and Janis, Casey, a teacher-leader of a single-district strike in the South described how teachers are not treated like experts. She also made it clear that this devaluing is also apparent for those with a lot of teaching experience. She stated:

> Someone who's been teaching for a long time is not treated with the same respect as someone who has been practicing medicine for a long time or running a restaurant for a long time or anything like that. It's like, "No, you don't know the latest thing-a-ma-bob. Therefore, you're not valuable and what you know is wrong." Anybody who's actually been in the classroom and seen and experienced a teacher at work knows you can't teach that stuff. That is a craft. This is something that someone has honed over time, and it really

> can't be replicated. Each teacher has to come into it for themselves. There's no value of that the way there is value of, say, people who are experienced in other fields.

Casey's statement shows that, even though teaching is a craft that is mastered through experience, experience and expertise are not valued. Instead, novel initiatives are valued more than the honed skills developed by experienced teachers. Casey describes feeling relatively deprived in terms of respect in comparison to doctors and restaurant managers.

Relatedly, teachers expressed frustration that their certifications, hard earned through education, intense internship and student teaching placements, and rigorous testing were not respected, especially with increasing numbers of teachers with emergency certification. Fern, a teacher-leader of a statewide strike in the South stated:

> When giving emergency certification to people, you are minimizing what I went to school for or what I went to school for is not enough, or it's too much and anybody can do this. So nurses do go to school, they have to go to school. You can't give them an emergency certification. So why can [you do this for] a teacher? I mean, it's not just babysitting, and handing worksheets.

Similar to the other teachers, Adela, a teacher-leader of a multi-district strike in the West, describes feeling relatively deprived in terms of recognition, even though, as mentioned by Janis, Bettina, and Fern, so many teachers have advanced degrees that required hard work to obtain. However, Adela also expresses frustration around the fact that even though teachers do a very important job, they are not respected. She stated:

> I definitely think that, even though a lot of us have our master's degrees, and we studied hard to be where we're at, I don't feel like, in the United States, being a teacher necessarily brings the same kind of recognition that being a doctor or a lawyer would, even though we're molding and creating the future workforce and future doctors and lawyers.

Adela's statement makes it clear that, even though teachers are highly educated and do extremely important work, being a teachers is less respected compared with other professions (professions

occupied by a future workforce that teacher mold and create!) with a similar level of education, such as doctors and lawyers.

The link between relative deprivation to similarly-educated professionals and sexism

Participants explicitly linked the relative deprivation that they experience in comparison with similarly-educated professionals with sexism associated with teaching being a profession that is largely feminized. Teachers were not asked about sexism in relation to relative deprivation, but, rather, this issue arose organically as teachers described the relative deprivation that they experienced to similarly-educated professionals. Thus, descriptions of comparisons between teachers and similarly educated professionals were automatically linked to sexism and teachers expressed an understanding that the way that their profession was worse off in comparison to others is largely due to the fact that it is feminized. For example, Casey stated:

> I think the fact that teaching is heavily gendered and is largely seen as women's work. It means that it has been systematically undervalued. I think that in other professions that aren't that, it doesn't happen. It's not only largely gendered as for women. It's taking care of kids. That's how it's seen. I still talk to state legislators who tell me things like, "Well, we don't really need to raise the pay for teachers because it's just something teachers do before they get married. Once they get married, their husband should take care of them." I'm like, it's not 1952.

Casey's statement not only shows how sexist devaluation leads to relative deprivation compared with other professors but also points out that people envision teaching simply as childcare. She also describes conversations with legislators who *still* view teaching as a temporary profession that is done before women marry and/or as a second professor that is not the main source of income.

Similarly, Jordan, a teacher leader of a single-district strike in the West also linked the relative deprivation experienced by teachers in comparison to similarly-educated professionals to

sexism. However, they focus on a specific mechanism of respect and value, pay. Jordan stated: "We don't get paid as much [as similarly-educated professionals]…because our profession is very female based. There's definitely an acknowledgement of how because it's female based there is a huge wage gap." They then go on to described conversations with their colleagues about this acknowledgement in comparison with similarly-educated professionals and stated: "That discussion went around like if this was a male-dominated profession, would this be the problem? No way, because they would have gotten the wages they wanted right away."

Jordan statement shows frustration knowing that teachers would not experience the relative wage deprivation to similarly-educated professionals that they experience had their profession been male dominated. This acknowledgement was echoed throughout the interviews. For example, Janis, resigned "I think we never would have been treated the way we were, had it been like a 50/50 or a male-dominated profession."

However, this frustration about relative deprivation as a result of sexism was not only experienced by women and non-binary teachers. Men also recognized this issue and experienced frustration as a result of this sexism. Like, Casey, Jerry, a teacher-leader of a multi-district strike in the West, described how teaching has consistently been viewed as "a supplemental wage" and mentioned the fact that teachers' "income is suppressed is from this concept that women's jobs are less valuable inherently than men's jobs." Similarly, Ethan, a teacher-leader of a statewide strike in the West stated that "most teachers have a really good sense that the teaching profession is treated this way because historically it's been primarily female. So that is definitely in the air for sure." Ian, a teacher leader of a single-district strike in the West also expressed frustration that the relatively poor treatment of teachers compared with other professions was due to sexism and then linked this to the activism stating:

> Teaching which has always been deemed kind of a feminine profession, especially in elementary and to a certain extent, high school, but as women have progressed in our society perhaps they are more willing to demand more and feel more empowered to actually demand things… women no longer are going to accept second-class status.

All of these above quotes show that teachers, regardless of gender, recognize that relative deprivation of respect, trust, and value (including monetary value) is linked to sexism and antiquated notions about teaching. Teachers continually expressed frustration over the fact that there is no way that they would be treated the way that they were if their profession was not feminized. However, Ian's quote makes it clear that passive acceptance of this relative deprivation in comparison to other professions is not something that women are willing to continue to accept. The structural strain related declines in funding could be elevating a persistent grievance related to sexism due to the disruption to the quotidian that teachers feel in relation to numerous aspects of their work, as described in the previous section. This aligns with Pinard's assertion that a new threat can reinvigorate a long standing grievance (2011). This sexism grievance could also be elevated due to extensive women's rights activism around the time of the teacher strikes, e.g., the Me Too Movement and the Women's March. The relationship between relative deprivation and activism will be analyzed in the chapter to follow. First, however, I will focus on comparisons that teachers made between themselves and other teachers.

SOCIAL COMPARISONS TO TEACHERS IN OTHER AREAS

Participants also made comparisons with teachers in other states and districts. However, when describing comparisons with other states, descriptions of relative deprivation was interspersed with descriptions of relative advantage and a general acknowledgement that all teachers are devalued and deserve better. Comparisons with neighboring districts were often

elicited because of the deleterious effects of teacher attrition on the lived experiences of those that stay due to teachers leaving relatively deprived districts for those with more resources, disrupting the quotidian of teachers that stay. In this section, I will first focus on social comparisons with teachers in other states and then discuss comparisons with neighboring districts.

Relative Deprivation in Comparison with Other States

Teachers made comparisons with teachers in other states. However, these comparisons tended to be a bit more complex than those in comparison with similarly-educated professionals. Teachers recognized that they were relatively deprived in some aspects, but better off in others. Twyla, a teacher leader of a multiple-district strike in the South, for example, stated "We're worse than [the] United States [on average], but then sometimes I hear what an Oklahoma or Arizona teacher puts up with, I realized we're better [off]."

Ian also recognized that their situation was better than teachers in Oklahoma, but also that teachers in his area were relatively deprived in a specific way; in this case, in per-pupil expenditures. He stated:

> New teachers have it a little bit better than in Oklahoma or in southern states where they do not have a strong future union, but I do also understand that I think other states fund their kids greater than [state redacted] does.

Similar to Ian and Twyla, Louise, a teacher leader of a statewide strike in the South, described being relatively deprived in some ways, but that other states were worse off. However, she also made it clear that all teachers face similar struggles. She stated:

> We were between 47th and 49th in all education indicators: expenditures, teacher pay, funding for public education as a whole. [State redacted] was down at the bottom in every category, and so others were as well because 47th to 49th, that means that there was always somebody worse than we were…We were last in our region and in the contiguous

> states that surround us, but I think that might set up a false narrative about, oh my state was way worse, because I don't know the background on what the other states were going through…But no matter who was experiencing what, the feelings are all the same, that our students deserve better and that we had to take action in order to save public education for our students.

Louise's statement shows a shared struggle among all teachers and understanding that students deserve better, even when teachers in her state were almost at the bottom in every indicator. She takes the time to point out that even though they were between 47th and 49th on all metrics, there were always teachers and students that were worse off.

Overall teachers made it clear that while they were indeed relatively deprived in some ways, they were also better off in other ways. This showed empathy towards other teachers who were facing similar struggles and were worse off than them in some ways. The solidarity felt among teachers nationwide was very apparent in the interviews. Thus, teacher leaders did not express strong frustration with disparities between states. Rather, they were aware that teachers everywhere faced similar or worse struggles than them in many ways and comparisons with distant other states did not affect their lived experiences. However, lived experiences were affected when making more nearby comparisons, as will be described in the next section.

Relative Deprivation in Comparison with Other Districts

Teachers also made comparisons with other neighboring districts both within their state and in other nearby states. Their lived experiences and quotidians were disrupted by the relative deprivation they felt in comparison to other districts often because these relatively-advantaged districts poached teachers from their district that then, in turn, affected numerous aspects of the remaining teachers' jobs. Sheena, a teacher leader of Western single-district strike described:

> We're about a 10 minute drive in any direction, to the border of another school district. So, there's like five that surround us and all of them were making significantly more in

> salary…we were losing teachers to nearby districts. It got to the point that there were something like 70 unfilled vacancies and it became a crisis on the campuses, because you'd have long term subs and the kids were complaining they weren't getting the instruction that they needed.

Sheena then went on to describe how the subs often are not experts with the subject matter, so teachers will often take on additional entire classes of students which makes all of their jobs so much harder.

George, a teacher leader of a single-district strike in the West also echoed Sheena's sentiment of the lived difficulty of losing teachers to neighboring districts:

> One of the problems is that we lose good teachers to other districts because they want to get paid more. They drive just a different direction and they can make however much more every year. And that's not just bad because we're losing good teachers, but is bad because at our site, we're trying to build the strongest site we can and build community and then we keep losing people. It's just a continual problem.

George's statement shows the difficulty of building community and creating a strong school site when teachers are continually leaving. This affects both the working experiences of teachers, the learning experience of students, and the rating and image of the school in general. This can be a big problem when the overall rating of the school, such as the A-F grade system that is common in many states, affects the student population and, thus, the overall funding.

Like George, Olive, a teacher leader of a statewide strike in the South, described the effects on her district of continual attrition and described the magnitude of this saying "we cannot keep teachers year-to-year…my school has been completely different almost every year." She then described how the relative deprivation of her district, compared to a district in a nearby state, affects her daily experience of feeling as though her work is not being valued. She stated:

> My school is 15 minutes from the [state redacted] border. So, a lot of the best teachers I know have, in the last couple of years, applied for jobs and transferred and are making that 20 minute drive for 20,000 more dollars a year, but the thing is, you get paid what you're valued. A lot of things are highly incentivized. I think those teachers feel valued. Curricularly, I don't think they have as much freedom as we do. There are some benefits to being a [state redacted] teacher. I feel like I'm given a lot of freedom to innovate. I'm given a lot of curricular freedom… I get the sense that, that kind of freedom and that kind of support doesn't exist in the same way, but I know that teachers who have gone there are happy.

While Olive described a culture of feeling devalued in her school district compared with her teacher friends who have gone to work in the neighboring district who feel happy and valued, she also, as was apparent in the previous section, described being better off in some ways as well compared with this neighboring district, in this case, particularly with regard to autonomy.

The above statements show that relative deprivation to teachers in other nearby districts affects the lived experiences of teachers, with regard to, for example, the ability to build community and a strong school district, the workload and education of students, and feeling valued overall. The proximal location of these other districts that are relatively advantaged provides a unique glimpse into a similar, but better in some ways, working situation that is attainable for the teachers with just a short drive. This attainability leads to much attrition from the relatively-deprived district which affects those teachers that remain in innumerable ways and also gives teachers direct insight into how their working conditions could, and should, be better.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Teachers made social comparisons both with similarly-educated professionals and other educators in areas near and far. They made comparisons with similarly-educated professionals that showed relative deprivation in many aspects, such as pay, amount and types of work, lack of respect, and not being treated like experts. However, they consistently linked the source of these forms of relative deprivation to sexist devaluation of teaching as a result of teaching being a feminized occupation. This grievance of sexism may have been elevated (Pinard 2011) due to the

intense period of structural strain that teachers currently experience. Teachers also made comparisons with teachers in other locations. However, these comparisons were a bit more complex because teachers made it clear that, even though they were relatively deprived in some ways, they were also better off in other ways in comparison to other teachers. The social comparisons that teachers made with teachers in nearby districts generally centered on the way in which attrition from their relatively-deprived districts affected their lived experiences and disrupted their quotidian. Below I discuss each of these findings further.

Teachers consistently described feeling relatively deprived in comparison to similarly-educated professionals. Some of the facets of relative deprivation that were pointed out related to workload, pay, emotional labor, respect, and value. Further, highly-educated teachers such as Janis and Bettina expressed frustration that teachers' advanced degrees are not treated as significant, especially in comparison to how advanced degrees are esteemed in other profession. In essence, and in accordance with the aspects of professionalism described by Freidson (1991), the work that teachers do is not treated like a profession.

Similarly, highly-experienced teachers, such as Casey, mentioned that teaching experience was not valued, especially in comparison to the esteem afforded to highly-experienced workers in other professions. Rather than respecting education, experience, and traditional certification processes, teachers felt that novel ideas from the outside or from administration, regardless of whether effective or not, were respected more. Even though all teachers who have actually been in the classroom know that teaching is a craft that is honed over time through experience. Like the discussion around education and certification, this was often attributed to people who have power over teachers having no idea what it is actually like in the classroom. Teachers often expressed disdain about "research-based" initiatives proposed by

those with no classroom experience. This aspect of comparison between teachers and similarly-educated professionals also arises in the discussion of relative deprivation to the past, as will be described in Chapter 6, where teachers describe initiatives decreasing the autonomy that they have in comparison to the past. This is one of the reasons why it is so important for the words of teachers to be heard, valued, and understood. It also shows the need for more educator representation in research and in positions of power.

The narratives of teachers centering on a relative deprivation of respect in comparison with other professions leads to an important question: what is the source of this disrespect? As demonstrated in Bettina's narrative, sometimes the source of this disrespect was described as administration, and, as demonstrated by Casey's narrative, sometimes this source was legislators. But, more frequently the source of disrespect was general (see, for example, the narratives of Janis, Adela, and Ethan). Extant research in education on the disrespect experienced by teachers has generally centered on student disrespect (e.g., Gordillo 2013; Landers et al. 2011; Schonfeld 2017). However, narratives of student disrespect did not arise in my interviews with teacher leaders. This points to a need for more research on sources of disrespect that impact the work experience of teachers. The service triangle of power perspective (Lopez 2010; McCammon and Griffin 2000; Korczynski 2009) may be a useful framework in approaching this topic, and I hope that future research will address this.

As the narratives of Adela, Jordan, Jerry, Ethan, Ian, and Janis showed, teachers not only recognized that they were relatively deprived compared to similarly-educated professionals, but they also linked this to sexism. Teachers consistently identified that the devaluation they experienced was linked to the fact that teaching is a feminized occupation. They also pointed out that teachers would be much more valued if the profession was gender balanced. Jordan pointed

out that men would be afforded whatever wage they wished, simply because they were men. This aligns with my previous research (e.g., Brockman 2021) that found that men are automatically afforded with more respect in the workplace compared with women and nonbinary genders that inequitably provides them with more privilege, respect, trust, and opportunities that facilitate success.

Because of the salience of teacher narratives centering on devaluation, more research is needed on the relationship between feeling devalued and contemporary teacher social movements. It is possible that grievances related to devaluation, which does not always have to be the result of relative deprivation in comparison to similarly-educated professionals, could play a role in eliciting teacher protest strikes as a grievance, perhaps in relation to structural strain. . Additionally, more research is needed on the relationship between teacher devaluation and variation in gender equity.

Teachers also made social comparisons with teachers in other states, but often discounted these comparisons by pointing out areas that actually have it worse than them. Ian and Twyla, for example, each pointed out that they were relatively deprived as compared to national averages, but also recognized that other areas, such as Oklahoma, had it worse than them. As Louise made clear, teachers everywhere face similar struggles and realize that their students deserve better across the country. There was a strong sense of solidarity in the narratives of all teachers in the fight to save public education in the United States and that they were all in this fight together.

Relative deprivation scholars may label this experience of making downward social comparisons as relative gratification (e.g., Davis 1959; Gatto, Guimond, and Dambrun 2018). However, as has also been the case in my previous research on relatively-deprived groups (see, for example, Brockman 2021), I do not think that this concept is apt because teachers appeared to

be sympathetic to the experiences of teachers in other states and did not appear to derive positive emotions or gratification from making downward social comparisons. Instead, teachers felt empathy for their fellow teachers and solidary alongside them in the struggle for improving the situation of teachers and public education broadly. Thus, perhaps more powerful than any sense of frustration due to inequity among teacher groups in distinct areas was this sense of solidarity or being a part of the same social unit (Melucci 1996) that deserved better. As the movement spread from location to location this solidary also grew whereby teachers experienced support from other teachers in distant areas and were unified as a part of this powerful movement. This spread of the movement from place to place and the way in which solidarity promoted the larger movement will be explored in my future research centering on diffusion.

Finally, teachers also made comparisons with teachers in other districts. However, these comparisons were often elicited due to the impact of high levels of attrition of teachers moving to relatively-advantaged districts from relatively-deprived districts. In nearly all of these cases, teachers pointed out that the main reason for this attrition was an extreme disparity in salary whereby teachers could go to a neighboring district and make much more money, upwards of $20,000 a year, as described by Olive. These nearby teacher comparisons appeared to operate differently than those that were more distant, perhaps because teachers were given a first-hand glimpse into how their situation could and should actually be improved, or, perhaps, because teachers felt the concrete impact of the relative deprivation of their district compared with neighboring districts because of the way that their lived experiences were affected by losing quality teachers in their schools. This disrupted the quotidian of teachers making it so that their workload was often increased due to insufficient numbers of teachers in their schools and/or teachers being replaced by long-term subs that were not experts in the subject matter. This made

it so that students were not receiving the education they deserved and needed. Further, good teachers continually leaving school districts made it difficult for schools to become strong and build a solid community of effective teachers. A contribution of this study is an examination of variation with regard to nearness of reference groups. My dissertation has the unique opportunity to do this since teachers made comparisons with other teachers both near and far. This variation will be explored further in the following chapter.

Shultziner (2013) calls for a conceptualization of protest movement emergence that is linked to lived experiences. He argues that these experiences have a strong impact on the emotional and cognitive states of actors which can motivate an individual to participate in a protest and/or join a social movement organization. The way in which relative deprivation as related to lived experiences and the role in contemporary teacher protest strikes will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Relative Deprivation as a Grievance and Frame: An Analysis of the Role of Social Comparison in Contemporary Teacher Protest Strikes

This chapter analyzes the role of relative deprivation in comparison with other teachers and similarly-educated professionals in the 2018 and 2019 unprecedented wave of United States K-12 teacher protest strikes. To do this, I draw upon data derived from semi-structured interviews with 35 teachers who also served as leaders within their local strikes. As shown in the previous chapter, teachers recognized that they were relatively deprived in comparison to 1) similarly-educated professionals due to sexism related to teaching being a feminized occupation and 2) some teachers in other areas. While the previous chapter showed variation in the ways that teacher leaders described experiencing relative deprivation in comparison with others, this chapter shows variation in the role that relative deprivation played in eliciting protest strikes. In particular, this chapter's analysis will show that only some forms of comparisons with others played a main role in causing teachers to strike. Other comparisons to other teachers and even professionals generally were <u>not</u> the main motivators of striking. The following chapter will explore the ways in which teachers described experiencing relative deprivation to the past and how this type of relative deprivation mattered in their protest strikes.

In general, there appear to be two processes by which relative deprivation led to the protest strikes: 1) as a grievance that motivated the strike action and/or 2) as an effective frame that brought teachers on board with the activism and made the protest strikes possible. See Figure 3 for a graphical portrayal of these two processes. The first process can be seen in relative deprivation with a nearby reference group that disrupted the quotidian and affected the lived experiences of teachers, or those experiences related to the ebb and flow of everyday life (McIntosh and Wright 2018), which played an important role as a grievance motivating protest

strikes. As this chapter will show, however, contrary to the myriad of protest signs pointing out relative deprivation in comparison with other states, social comparisons made with other teachers in other states did not appear to be as powerful of a grievance, usually not one that motivated striking, again unless that state was very close by and/or the teacher had direct experience in another state. Comparisons with other professionals also did not appear to serve as a strong grievance motivating strikes.

However, my findings do make an important discovery, and here I turn to the second process. Relative deprivation in comparison with other teachers and similarly-educated professionals was consistently described as useful as a framing strategy by teacher leaders to bring more teachers on board, making the strikes possible and growing the size of the strikes.[13]

Thus, the role of relative deprivation in the protest strikes varied based on the type of relative deprivation, the distance of the reference group, how much the lived experiences and quotidians of teachers were affected by their deprivation, and the way in which relative deprivation was framed by teacher leaders. Some types of relative deprivation, e.g., comparisons with teachers in nearby districts appeared to be a powerful grievance motivating the overall protest strike. However, other types of relative deprivation, e.g., those with distant teachers in other states and similarly-educated professionals played an important role in framing by teacher leaders and bringing more teachers on board.

[13] Understanding strike size is not the focus of my dissertation, but I may examine this in future research.

FINDINGS

As shown in the previous chapter, teachers made it clear that they, indeed, recognized that they were relatively deprived in comparison with other teachers and similarly-educated professionals. This chapter shows variation in the way that relative deprivation in comparison with others led to contemporary teacher protest strikes. Relative deprivation served as a grievance motivating the strikes when its source was proximal and when the deprivation disrupted the lived experiences of teachers within an area. This happened often in areas that were a short drive away from other, better off districts. Comparisons were often made salient in these cases due to large numbers of teachers exiting relatively-deprived districts in favor of the relatively-advantaged districts leading those teachers who stayed to experience the deleterious effects of this exodus. Unless the reference group was proximal and the relative deprivation to this reference group disrupted their quotidians, the narratives of teachers did not describe relative deprivation as a grievance that caused protest events.

Nevertheless, relative deprivation did consistently appear to be useful as a framing strategy that built cohesion among teachers. Ultimately, this led more teachers to become willing to mobilize and built a critical mass of teachers that made the strikes possible. In this chapter I will describe the role of relative deprivation in comparison with others in contemporary teacher protest strikes both as a grievance and as a frame.

The Role of Relative Deprivation in Contemporary Teacher Protest Strikes as a Grievance

As described above, relative deprivation, when used frequently in earlier social movement studies, was generally described as a grievance motivating movement emergence. I find that indeed this was the case for teachers, but only for certain types of relative deprivation.

In this section, I will describe the ways that relative deprivation stemming from differences with nearby districts served as a grievance motivating the activism. (Another type of relative deprivation that served as a powerful grievance leading to activism was relative deprivation to the past and this will be described in the following chapter.) Here, I will analyze those comparisons with other teachers that served as a grievance leading to teacher activism.

Anne, a teacher leader of a multi-district strike in the West, in a way similar to teachers quoted in the previous section, described deleterious effects on the lived experiences of teachers in her district due to nearby districts poaching numerous teachers. She then described the role of these feelings of relative deprivation on her state's strike. She stated:

> We did use those comparisons and they definitely got people fired up for sure. When they could drive just across the state line and make more money in [states redacted] that can be really frustrating. And we had a number of members who had done just that. Who decided I can drive an extra 30 minutes, be in [state with lower cost of living redacted] and make 20% more…I think as teachers, we really care about fairness. And it takes a lot for us to admit when we've been treated unfairly, but when we get there, we're ready to take action.

Similarly, as George described the difficulty of building a strong school community due to the high levels of attrition of quality teachers moving to relatively advantaged districts, he connected this grievance to the strikes stating:

> I definitely think that was a pretty big factor for a lot of people, especially when you have several districts that are close by. I can drive through these districts within the hour and they're just a few miles away. Like why don't I just drive across the bridge and go teach?

While describing how relative deprivation affected the lived experiences of teachers in her district, Olive elucidated how many teachers in her statewide strike drew motivation from a history of labor movements in their areas, but teachers in her area did not have that same history. Being in the corner of the state they have, however, three other states extremely close by and the relative deprivation experienced in relation to teachers in these states was extremely motivating in making teachers feel like they needed to do something. She stated:

> Geography is a really important factor in these conversations. I think it also affected how the different parts of [state redacted] sort of processed their resistance and their actions. [Area redacted] doesn't have that heritage of coal, and steel, and labor and history. But what we do have is [state redacted] on one side of us and [state redacted] on the other, and most of those states poaching our best teachers year after year with salaries that are nearly double what we make in [state redacted]. And so, the teachers up here were highly motivated to go out, and to organize, and to push for higher pay and better benefits because they want to stay and teach in [state redacted]. They don't want to have to drive 20 or 30 minutes to [states redacted] to make a living wage.

Olive then went on to describe how the relative deprivation of her district compared to nearby districts in other states became a key frame. She continued:

> When you're a teacher from [area redacted] that's one of the primary talking points. And lawmakers just like to say, well, like sanitation workers make more in [neighboring state redacted]. That's their knee jerk reaction is that "everyone gets paid more in [neighboring states redacted]. The standard salaries are all higher." But nobody is poaching our garbage men.

Olive's statement begins to describe how relative deprivation was used as a frame in this contemporary wave of teacher social movements. This theme will be explored in depth in the next section.

The Role of Relative Deprivation in Contemporary Teacher Protest Strikes as an Effective Frame

Regardless of whether connected to lived experiences or not, relative deprivation did appear to be useful as a framing tactic to attract teachers to the movement and generate a critical mass of strikers. This section will describe how relative deprivation in relation to teachers in others states and similarly-educated professionals did not necessarily serve as the main grievance motivating the teacher protest strikes but was consistently very prevalent as a frame. Fern, a teacher leader in a southern statewide strike, for example, described how the decision to strike was not based on the situation of teachers in her state compared with those in other states or

being relatively deprived to them, but, rather, the decision to strike had to do with, at least partially, being inspired by these others teachers' strikes. In short, relative deprivation was not a main grievance that led to strike action. She stated:

> I think the only decision that was made based on other states would be that we saw other states do it, so we could do it too. No, I don't think it had to do with, "Oh, let's compare, contrast." I mean, every state has told us horror stories of what their education system looks [like]. And, so, I don't think it has anything [to do with our mobilization]. And I think "number 47 is not okay, was a great tagline. It gets people's attention."

As Fern's statement shows, comparing and contrasting the situations of teachers in her area with other teachers did not result in a salient grievance, and her statement echoes those from chapter one of teachers who recognized that they were relatively deprived in some ways to other teachers, but also felt that all teachers, regardless of state, struggled within their education system. However, Fern also makes it clear that relative deprivation was, indeed, a helpful framing strategy by pointing out that the frame "Number 47 is not okay" was attention-grabbing. While Fern did not elaborate whose attention was grabbed by this tagline, one may presume that this frame could have appealed to multiple groups, including teachers where, then, it had the potential to generate frame alignment among teachers and others who may support the movement. It is possible that the frame could have grown the size of the strike by bringing more teachers in.

Similarly, Ethan, a teacher leader in a western statewide strike described how while the idea that gas-station managers made more money than teachers garnered attention on social media, these comparisons were not a motivating grievance for their strikes. He stated:

> The only comparison that I saw was there was a gas station that was hiring at the time for managers and they kind of went viral a little bit in [state redacted] it seemed like because they were paying their managers with like no experience necessary, just a high school diploma, better than most of the teachers were getting paid. So, when that got out, that became a little bit of a thing. But other than that comparison, I didn't really see much of it. I think, the main motivator was just people's material experiences and just being pissed off about that.

Ethan's statement illuminates how, while comparisons do, indeed, garner attention, they were not the impetus for the strikes. Rather, more important were the material conditions of teachers. Ethan also offered more information further showing that teachers are not generally concerning themselves with comparisons with other workers:

> They're [teachers are] not saying things like, "Well, nurses do similar education and they get paid so well." I think, again, it's like because they're friends with nurses and we know nurses are stressed out and they're not getting paid as much as they deserve. So, you don't hear a ton of that… [they're] talking in general terms of just saying, "Look, I made $28,000 after taxes." And just leaving it at that and not saying, "Truck drivers have X amount of education and get paid better." You don't really hear that sort of thing.

This statement offers more clarity on the lack of the role of relative deprivation as a grievance motivating the strikes and, instead, shows specifically how material conditions, in this case making only $28,000 after taxes, aggrieved teachers. It shows that teachers are not thinking about their low pay in comparison with their nurse and truck driver friends, but, rather, how living on this low salary affects their lives. This aligns with the finding described earlier where those instances of relative deprivation that were connected to proximal lived experiences served as motivating factors for the strikes. Here we see that a different and, in many ways more straightforward lived experience, the lived experience of inability to live on low pay also served as a main grievance.

Sarah, a teacher leader of a single-district strike in the West, like both Ethan and Fern, described the way that social-comparison-focused framing can garner attention from teachers. As a leader of the movement, she capitalized on knowing this and actually distributed pamphlets pointing out the relative deprivation experienced by teachers in her district in comparison with similarly-educated professionals. She stated: "[We] did a lot of pamphlets for teachers that we

would pass out. So, there were a lot of handouts [to] go over this and getting that word out." In her case, the teacher union and other teacher leaders took the lead of distributing pamphlets getting the word out to other teachers about the relative deprivation that they experienced and generate frame resonance once they were planning to strike. Having these injustices "explained out," as Sarah further described, "just how other people with a similar degree are getting paid a lot more money" was a useful strategy for the leaders of this movement to build and strengthen a coalition of teachers. Like Sarah, Angus, a teacher leader of a multiple-district strike in the West described creating handouts that laid out relative deprivation. He stated: "We'd share flyers and whatnot that would have various data comparing district to district and then also looking state by state with different things and all. It was all a very heady time."

Similarly, Drew, a teacher leader of a statewide strike in the South, also described a concerted process of pointing out relative deprivation to teachers to broaden support. He stated: "Salary wise, I know we were like 48 or 49. You could just look at the national rankings, but I remember showing some teachers here. I showed the salary schedule from the district I've been in in [state redacted], before I came here. And they were jaws "Oh, my God, you made that much," [and me telling them that] it doesn't have to be this way." Then, when asked about whether this played a role in the strikes he said, "A little bit for some, because I remember discussions about it [relative deprivation] in the Facebook group, but I don't think it was a major factor according to people."

Many other teachers, like Drew, had direct insight into the situation of other teachers because they had worked in other districts or states themselves. This made them recognize the relative deprivation of their current district or state in comparison to the locale where they previously worked and want to share this information with other teachers. Below I provide a

quote from Helen, a teacher leader of a single district strike in the South, as another example. Helen said:

> "Something I've noticed about [state redacted], there's not outside influence. So, most of my teacher friends have never taught in any other place in their life other than [district redacted]. So they don't realize that this is not normal. That this is not good, because they don't have anything to compare it to… So, I made a whole bunch of charts that I compared our district to [the two districts that she had worked in previously]. I made a chart showing the comparison of what the teachers get in each place. So that got the teachers talking. Then the districts had to talk about it because all the teachers are talking about it."

She then went on to describe a school board meeting she attended:

> So, in that meeting, they were comparing with [previous district redacted] and they were trying to make [current district redacted] look not as bad as [city redacted]is by saying, "Well, this is the total package and this is that." And I made a noise because I was like, "I worked for [previous district redacted]. You guys don't even know what you are talking about. That's just salary. My friend is making $80,000 a year, that does not include her benefits."

Helen and Drew's quotes both show how their understanding of better situations that teachers can experience, because they came from relatively advantaged districts to relatively deprived districts, can help teachers see the relative deprivation that they experience in comparison with teachers in other areas. Their quotes also show the effects of framing this issue in clear ways that are easily understood. Their quotes and the quotes by other teacher leaders above show how relative deprivation frames put forth by teachers was an effective way to build movement momentum and bring teachers on board. Overall, the above narratives show that relative deprivation served as a highly-resonant frame. This frame was frequently utilized in order to garner support and bring teachers on board once the decision to strike was already made.

DISCUSSION

The role of relative deprivation in contemporary teacher protest strikes is complex and I identify two processes by which it led to activism. The first process shows how, in alignment

with classical theoretical conceptions of relative deprivation, relative deprivation did serve as a main grievance motivating teacher protest strikes. It operated in this way when directly connected to the lived experiences of teachers, which was often a result of the effects of proximity or experience with relatively-advantaged districts. Regardless of whether relative deprivation served as a grievance motivating strikes, however, I identify a second process by which relative deprivation led to teacher strikes in that framing relative deprivation in effective ways consistently was identified as an important factor leading to the strikes.

Teachers who felt relatively deprived compared to teachers in neighboring districts or states often felt the effects of this relative deprivation on their lived experiences due to the poaching of talented teachers away from their district or state and identified this as a main grievance motivating the activism in their area. The nearby position of relatively-advantaged districts caused teachers to clearly see the injustices they faced, especially when they had numerous friends who had left to teach in a nearby district. This led them to understand that they were treated unfairly and catalyzed a desire to take action. Action was also catalyzed by a difficult decision that teachers with relatively-deprived districts compared with teachers in other districts nearby often faced: either leave their community to make a living wage or do something about the disparity.

A key contribution of my study is identifying the types of relative deprivation that played important roles in leading to the strikes. In this chapter we see the effects of relative deprivation based on the nearness of the reference group in producing the strikes. My study is especially useful in understanding variations in the types of relative deprivation that matter. My study points to the power of nearby reference groups in generating quotidian disrupting grievances that

lead to collective action. However, regardless of nearness, all types of relative deprivation that teachers described were used as strategic frames (McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith 2004).

While all of my participants described experiencing at least one type of relative deprivation, teacher leaders who did not face relative deprivation that directly affected their lived experiences and disrupted their quotidian with a proximate reference group generally did not identify relative deprivation *as a catalyzing grievance that led their protest strike to emerge*. Rather, they noted the utility of relative deprivation as a highly-resonant frame that enabled them to build cohesion and bring teachers on board with the activism. I do not analyze specific phrases within frames that were used. However, since we know that those frames that connect with everyday life rather than those that are more abstract resonate more with people (Ketelaars 2016), there could be a potential connection between those more everyday-life focused frames and activism. While analyzing this connection is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I hope that I can analyze the specific types of frames used for various types of relative deprivation in the future. I expect that there may be variation among various types of relative deprivation frames and this could be an interesting area of future research to understand how frames mobilized teachers and which types of frames were most effective. For example, for frames centering on comparisons with teachers in other states, a frame consisting of a simple presentation of raw numbers of school funding might be less effective than a frame that also incorporates a connection between these school funding amounts to large class sizes in their own particular school, which is something that affects the everyday lived experience of teachers. Nevertheless, a limitation of my study is that I do not interview teachers that were not leaders of their protest strikes. Thus, I cannot adequately understand the effects of different types of frames on rank and file teachers. I will discuss this limitation and others further in Chapter 7.

One of the potential reasons that comparisons with teachers in others areas did not seem to arise as a grievance motivating protest strikes was the overwhelming sense of solidarity that teachers described when making these comparisons. They were not expressing frustration about the injustice of relative deprivation of their state in comparisons with other states, but rather, they repeatedly recognized the shared struggle (Featherstone 2012) among all teachers in the United States. This awareness and feeling of belonging to the same, struggling social unit (Melucci 1996) may have also contributed to the larger social movement that spanned states, especially when considering how protest strikes spread from place to place, often with the direct help and influence of teachers in other striking areas (as will be elucidated in my future research on diffusion).

Nevertheless, teacher leaders continually described the awareness, and usage as frames, of innumerable statistics that described where they fell on various indicators in comparison with others states and similarly-educated professionals. They described using these statistics as a strategic frame with the goal of bringing teachers on board with the activism. Teachers like Sarah, Drew, and Helen made a concerted effort to point out relative deprivation to teachers by distributing pamphlets or helping teachers understand that their current situation can improve. By doing this, they may have been able to generate some grievances related to relative deprivation in their colleagues, but these comparisons with other states or similarly-educated professionals did not serve as grievances motivating their respective strikes like comparisons with nearby districts or, as will be described in the next section, like comparisons to the past. It is important to point out that Drew and Helen were among a large number of teacher leaders who had experience working in other districts and they worked hard to share their recognition of relative deprivation

of their new district in comparison with their former district(s). I hope to examine this phenomenon in more detail in a future paper.

CONCLUSION

While the protest signs carried by teachers suggested that relative deprivation was a key grievance that caused teacher protest strikes to emerge, the narratives of teachers showed that not all types of relative deprivation in comparison with others served as a grievance motivating these strikes. Unless this relative deprivation directly connected to lived experiences due to proximity or direct experience in other districts, these comparisons with others were not main motivations to strike. However, consistently, relative deprivation was described as useful as a highly-resonant framing strategy. This differs from previous theory on the role of relative deprivation in social movements that has centered solely on relative deprivation as a grievance. This is important empirically because it advances social movement theory by showing how relative deprivation is, indeed, still useful in contemporary movement emergence in a novel way and that relative comparisons to others can occur in different forms. My findings also have practical importance because they show a successful strategy for producing protest through highly-resonant frames centered on relative deprivation. Overall, my research helps unpack the black box of relative deprivation, which is sorely needed in contemporary social movement research.

Chapter 6: Frogs in Boiling Water: How Relative Deprivation to the Past Served as a Powerful Grievance in Contemporary Teacher Protest Strikes

So far in this dissertation, I have focused on relative deprivation in comparison to others. Specifically, I have analyzed how teachers compare themselves with other teachers and similarly-educated professionals as well as the role that these comparisons with others played in the contemporary wave of teacher protest strikes. Now I turn my attention to both the ways in which teachers described relative deprivation to the past and to the role that this may have played in their protest strikes. By comparisons to the past, I mean any comparisons made to a previous time before teachers' respective protest strikes. I do not place a particular delineation on a certain amount of time because teachers expressed relative deprivation to a wide array of points in the past.

Teachers consistently described that things were worse in comparison to the past and immediately linked this to their activism. Some of the specific ways they described that their job had gotten worse include diminishing autonomy, salaries not keeping up with the cost of living, declining working conditions, and deterioration of benefits. Teachers often brought up relative to the past very early in the interview and described comparisons and differences between past and present as a key grievance eliciting their protest strikes. They described conversations between more-veteran teachers and newer teachers as important to generating these shared grievances as well as similar framing strategies to those discussed in Chapter 5. However, newer teachers also experienced relative deprivation to the past, regardless of how long they were teaching, both personally and in a general sense understanding that the situation of teachers was worse than it had been in the past.

In this chapter, I will first highlight some of the ways in which teachers described relative deprivation to the past and its importance in eliciting these protest strikes. Then, I will show the process

by which relative deprivation to the past became a collective grievance among all teachers within a particular area, regardless of experience level.

"WORSE THAN IT'S EVER BEEN": HOW TEACHERS DESCRIBED RELATIVE DEPRIVATION TO THE PAST THAT LED TO ACTIVISM

Teachers described various ways that they were relatively deprived compared to the past, and they agreed that the teacher job has gotten worse over time. They had experienced something different now than when they entered the profession. This change over time made their job much more difficult than it used to be. Twyla, for example, described her profession by saying that it was "worse than it has ever been." She attributes this to an increasing "commitment to the conservative values of low taxes has just manifested itself in just a total deterioration of public goods." One of the ways this has affected her lived experiences as a teacher was by not being provided with the necessary resources she needed to teach. She stated "their commitment to low taxes and under investment in the infrastructure slowly became just egregious. I mean, I am teaching AP government out of a textbook from 2006." She put this into perspective by saying that Barack Obama was a senator at the time. She then expressed her frustration with these deteriorating conditions "So each year that goes by that just gets more and more ridiculous, Just undeniably ridiculous. As a teacher you're just like "what?!"". Twyla then described how her workload had become much more difficult over time due to the lack of needed resources describing her course materials as:

> Kind of like cobbled together using articles, it's like you got to build a course pack now, that's the thing college professors do. My teachers have become like curators. It's like I'm running my own personal library for every class because we don't have the most basic resources for our schools. So more and more and more is asked of us, and less and less is provided and over time not just mentally these teachers just get fed up.

Twyla's statement shows how her lived experience as a teacher is affected by the increasingly worsening conditions compared with the way it was in the past. She and her colleagues are essentially doing the work of college professors and, of course, are not paid for that. Rather they become more and more fed up.

This was echoed by other teachers as well. For example, Angus, a teacher leader of a multiple-district strike in the West said, "Everything I use, I have begged, borrowed or stolen from places online." However, alongside the increase in workload, teachers, such as Twyla, also described outrage in terms of a decrease in respect in comparison to the past. This deterioration of respect points to a structural strain of devaluation faced by teachers that has intensified over time. She stated:

> I think we felt outraged because it was like they scammed us… I thought that I was going to forego a lucrative high status job and in return, I was going to serve the public and take a job that has a lot of importance in society. And in return for that, I wasn't necessarily going to get a salary, but I was going to get a certain amount of job security and just a certain amount of respect for putting the public good before my own self-interest. At least in the past, we'd be like, we didn't pay teachers that much and we understood that so in return we gave them security and respect. And then suddenly, they took their security and respect away.

Twyla connects this deterioration of respect to the activism by describing it as the main issue on teachers' mind. She stated: "I think some public always thought it was about salary. I don't think it was really about that, it is about something more general, which was just respect." She goes on to acknowledge that, of course, pay is one indicator of respect but that wasn't what was "triggering" for teachers, especially since "people who really cared that much about money, wouldn't be teachers." She points out the deterioration of respect and the lack of being "equipped or resourced or consulted" in comparison to the past was most important for the activism.

Like Twyla, Anne, a teacher leader of a multiple-district strike in the South, also describes relative deprivation to the past in regard to numerous factors. She also connects relative

deprivation to the past with relative deprivation to others, specifically teachers in other proximal districts, as described above. She stated:

> I'd say it's worse for teachers now than when I started for a whole host of reasons. I think teacher turnover is higher than when I started. Our district used to be one of the premier districts to work in [state redacted] but we had a lot of really fantastic teachers leave for other districts that had much improved salary schedules over ours and had a lot of teachers leave the profession… Our statistics just kept getting worse and worse year after year as far as where we stand in per pupil funding, where we are in starting teacher pay, average pay. All those things. We were very aware of that. And it definitely was a driver [of the activism].

Anne then went on to describe ways in which relative deprivation to the past impacted teachers' decision to walk out. She described how teachers were motivated because they were

> feeling like you used to be able to be a teacher, have a good job and benefits and make it. And now it's so hard to make it; to make ends meet on a teacher's salary, but I also think all of the other things… that loss of autonomy. I'm sure like everywhere else, but here a lot of those mandates are unfunded. So, it adds a whole bunch of stress. But I think the high stakes testing coupled with the scripted teaching [were motivating]. Just a lot of the shifts in the delivery of how you're supposed to deliver instruction, I think has really soured people. And they want to be able to have that creativity and that autonomy back as a teacher. So, I would definitely say that was a fuel that pushed a lot of people to join in the walk outs.

Striking over relative deprivation of autonomy in comparison to the past, was echoed by Jerry who elucidated that this grievance was especially powerful for those who may not have been on the fence and not motivated by other grievances. He stated:

> Until the walkout, I would definitely say things had gotten worse [for teachers]. And that's part of the reason we were able to get this organizing message out there. Expectations of teachers have just gone through the roof. There was a place where there was a commensurate amount of respect given to teachers and their teaching autonomy. That's why teachers all taught something different. Teachers were free to pretty much, there was always a state-adopted curriculum, but how you got there and how you did it was always up to the individual teacher… Anyone that looked at this wholly as only an increase in pay may have balked. They may not have been able to keep the troops together but that loss of autonomy certainly was something that could push people over the edge. Yeah, I'm going to walk on this. So that definitely made a difference.

Ada, a teacher leader of a multiple-district strike in the South also made it clear that relative deprivation in the past played an important role in the teacher activism. Like Twyla, she also described how much more work her job entails. She stated:

> It used to be where it probably wasn't a 40 hour week job. And now it's a 70 hour week job because there's just this extra stuff. Where in the good old days, school would [end] at 3:30 or 3:00 or whatever, people went home, they might grade some papers, but it wasn't the same thing of, oh, I've got a meeting and these kids and the parents and all this other stuff. So, I think when you put all those things on there and you see the wages being stagnant, I think that's the thing…It has 100% gotten worse, 100%.

Ada then links this extra work to a decrease in autonomy and increased focus on data, describing this shift saying:

> It grows over time. So at some point, and I couldn't tell you exactly when it is, we became a data obsessed, now I know you're doing research so don't take this personally, a data obsessed society. And so instead of being like, "Well, what do the kids need?" it's "What does the data say?" So then you also had people that weren't in the classroom making the decisions… I think when I first started in general people had been in the classroom for a while, but now you have the more people out of the classroom telling the people in the classroom what to do… And we've just gotten away from that [trusting those in the classroom to make decisions] and it literally will take an undoing because it's the frog in the pot of the slow boil. You know what I'm talking about? Where it's like there's a frog in the pot, you turn up the temperature, it doesn't know that it's boiling. And all of a sudden it's boiling.

When asked if this comparison with the past played a part in the activism, Ada stated: "Yeah, absolutely, I do." Ada then went on to describe what the conversations surrounding relative deprivation to the past that led to the activism looked like. These conversations will be described in the next section.

"PAINTING THE PICTURE" AND HAVING THE CONVERSATIONS: HOW RELATIVE DEPRIVATION TO THE PAST BECAME A COLLECTIVE GRIEVANCE

As established in the previous section, teachers experienced relative deprivation to the past in various ways and identified this as an important grievance to their activism. However, this

section will describe the conversations and framing processes that relative deprivation to the past underwent. This is especially important because of the variation in direct experiences with relative deprivation to the past among teachers. Some teachers had personal experience with vastly better conditions in the past that they were able to reflect upon in comparison to the present. However, not all teachers were veteran teachers and may not have experienced vastly better conditions as a teacher. So, did relative deprivation to the past also serve as a grievance for them? How did relative deprivation to the past actually contribute to the activism? Was this a collective grievance? This section will answer these questions.

As mentioned in the previous section, Ada described her own personal experiences with better working conditions in the past and made comparisons with her current working conditions as a teacher. She then explicitly linked this to the strike activism and described how relative deprivation to the past became a collective grievance among both veteran and newer teachers. She began this description by describing variation that exists by years of experience stating:

> If somebody's been in it for 28 years, they can look back and go, "Well, yeah [things used to be better]" Because your first five years, you don't know what you're doing. You know what you're doing, but you're learning things.

She then goes on to describe some of the prevalent questions that newer teachers ask more veteran teachers during their overwhelming first few years:

> [Newer teachers ask "Hey, did we use to have all these meetings?" They [More veteran teachers] go, "Well, no." Or, "We didn't have all these meetings with this other principal or that other superintendent." But they don't notice it. So, what we've seen is sometimes people get close to retirement and they're like, "Well, I'll just stick it out." Well, then you have, I don't know, 10 years worth of people who are sticking it out instead of standing up and saying, "No."

So then, Ada goes on to describe how the process of newer teachers realizing that things used to be better and connecting this to their current situation and the numerous other options that they have was important to building the conversations that led to the activism.

> [Teacher activists were] people on both ends of the spectrum. There were definitely people who had been in it for 25 years who were like, "I love my profession. I can't believe everybody's leaving. Yes, I will do whatever I can to help." And then there's people who were in year two and they're like, "They want me to do this for how long? No. Things have got to change." The young people, they got options. They don't have to put up [with this]. And they don't feel the same loyalty of like, oh, you get in a district and you teach at a school and that's your job and blah, blah. That traditional role or whatever, they don't feel. They're like, "No, I'll go sell things on Etsy and be fine with it in my parents' basement." So they're like, "Yeah, let's burn it all down. I'll quit right now." And you're [more veteran teachers are] like, "Oh geez. Okay." So, I think there are conversations, but it's on both ends of it [with more veteran teachers knowing that it] doesn't have to be like this, that it was different [in the past] and [newer teachers] never knowing anything else, but knowing this [the teaching role] is crazy.

This description shows how conversations with more veteran teachers who had experienced better working conditions and knew that things could be better with newer teachers who were overwhelmed with the "crazy" role that they were experiencing in their first few years was vital. Ada's discussion also shows how more veteran teachers are able to reflect on the "good old days" of teaching they sometimes do not realize how bad it has gotten. It also shows how the shock, as well as the bravery, of newer teachers was vital in recognizing how "crazy" the teacher role had gotten. Her statement also shows a high level of solidarity among more veteran and newer teachers whereby more veteran teachers were willing to do whatever they could to help when newer teachers were ready to "burn it all down," even when they may not have been able to immediately notice how bad things had gotten over time. Numerous teachers connected this experience to the adage of a frog being cooked in boiling water whereby more veteran teachers do not immediately recognize how bad it has gotten until newer teachers, teachers moving in from other districts, or clear framing help them recognize that they are boiling.

But, relative deprivation to the past was also strategically framed too. Anne also used this adage stating: "Our [union] members have been the frog in the water as the heat has slowly been turned up. And for a long time, I think we just didn't really notice how bad things had gotten."

While Anne, who had been teaching for 21 years at the time of the strikes, mentioned various reasons why things were worse now in comparison to the past, she also described framing the issue as a relative deprivation compared to the past and educating teachers to help teachers recognize how bad things had actually gotten. She described a lot of this educating being done on Facebook,

> There were constantly new posts, new videos, new calls to action, asks for people to take some action… definitely stories of how much lost compensation teachers have experienced [over time] and the hardships that had created for their families. We had gone through a period of time where salaries were frozen or we also had a period of time where our salary was actually cut and we had furlough days. That's never really been made up by our district. Teachers were posting pictures of their classrooms and the lack of materials or the age of the materials that they had for their students. Leaky ceilings, and torn up carpet, and books going back to when Bill Clinton was president and nothing newer. Even older than that.

Anne then went on to describe how the educating conversations centered on relative deprivation to the past on social media were "so so critical" to making their activism possible.

Similarly, Vera, a teacher-leader of a multiple-district strike to in the West also described the need to educate educators on relative deprivation to the past, especially in relation to compensation loss over time and how resources had deteriorated in comparison to the past. She stated:

> We had been doing a lot of educating. And not that we needed to say, "live it out." But just painting that picture for educators about those very things that I said [the severity of the compensation loss over time and deterioration of resources]…. And just got to that breaking point of, that this is not okay. The way we're being forced to educate kids with such little resources. We started thinking wait a minute, this is not getting good. It's getting worse. And it was all over [spread throughout all of the teachers in the district] and we were just starting to really think.

Similarly, to Ada, Angus also described veteran teachers reflecting back on times that used to be better. He stated:

> The teacher pay is still not up to cost of living, and it's been many, many years. It will take a long, long time to really make up that difference. So, for veteran teachers, they were

> looking back on a time when teacher pay seemed to keep up with inflation a little better and thinking that we should still be making a lot more than we are.

Then, I asked Angus if teachers in general were also making this comparison in advance of the protest strikes or if it was just some teachers. He stated:

> I think again, it would depend on your experience. I think for a lot of teachers it was just kind of ignorance. It was like, "Well, okay. I've got my job. I'm doing my thing." But once that information was revealed to them, you kind of lay out just the raw numbers, I think that a lot of people were really surprised and really taken aback by, "Wow, we're really kind of getting the shaft here."

This statement aligns with Anne's description of framing relative deprivation to the past to strategically educate other teachers on the relative deprivation that they experience to the past in order to build solidarity. Angus described these numbers being laid out on the flyers teacher leaders distributed as mentioned in chapter 2 and that a lot of the messaging on these flyers, in Angus's case, was directed at "younger teachers" to show them how it used to be and that things did not have to be this way. He stated that teacher leaders took these steps because they believed that their action was a "once in a generation chance to really improve the situation for teachers." However, did newer teachers also experience relative deprivation to the past in their own right? This question will be explored in the next section.

NEWER TEACHER RELATIVE DEPRIVATION TO THE PAST

As shown in Angus' narrative in the previous section, more veteran teacher leaders directed at newer teachers framing focused on relative deprivation to the past at newer teachers. However, they may have underestimated how much relative deprivation to the past newer teachers experienced, even in the short amount of time that they were working in the district. Newer teachers were also movement leaders, leading conversations on relative deprivation to the past. When I asked Patricia, a teacher leader of a statewide protest strike in the South what the

main issue on teachers' mind was in making the decision to strike she stated that it was the loss of autonomy in comparison with the past, an experience of relative deprivation that she herself personally experienced, even though she had only been teaching for three years. She described this as follows:

> I felt this: it felt like the farther along you got in teaching, as time progressed, the more automated, cookie cutter, curriculum-based, stringent objectives it had become. I could see that, even in my three years of teaching, the loss of agency that we had from my first year to my third year of teaching. Especially with the veteran teachers that remained, I know that that's something that they would always express, that they felt like, instead of it being them making decisions on what was going to be best for their students, we had administrators, elected officials, employees of agencies that were [making] determinations.

The loss of autonomy was extremely prevalent in teachers' descriptions of relative deprivation to the past, even among new teachers. Mike had only been teaching for two years when he led his protest strike in his region and he experienced the relative deprivation of autonomy from year one to year two, expressing shock about all of the new things he was expected to implement in his second year of teaching. He stated:

> Teachers are never comfortable. Every year we come in, there's some new initiative or some new thing we have [to implement]. The wheel is constantly reinvented in our job. Constantly. Because for some reason, allowing teachers to go in and just do their job is just not allowed anymore.

Both Mike and Patricia's statements show both personal experiences of relative deprivation to the past and also a general understanding of relative deprivation shared among all teachers in their district and potentially beyond. As another example, Ethan, a teacher leader who had only been teaching for two years described relative deprivation to the past being a main factor in his statewide strike. He described some of the ways in which teachers are now treated as unheard of in the past. He stated:

> This idea of split classes where the classes are now split among three teachers because one of the teachers can't come and we couldn't find a sub, that's unheard of. To not have a

> crossing guard for example, that's just unheard of. We don't have crossing guards because they had to cut all the crossing guards. So then like we're out there, that was one of my jobs to also be the crossing guard, which we're not compensated for that. One of the first things I remember upon showing up is I was like, "Oh wow." I'm 21 starting this job and everybody else, like the "veteran" teachers are starting their third year and they're like 25, 30 years old. These are people who are taking the place of when I was in school and it was like the 70 year old teachers who were on the verge of retirement, they were the veteran teachers...So it's just all these sorts of issues, but money gets cut and we have to try to make do and it just was not a good situation. It was better than in some places. That was part of the reason why I stayed in that district but it was not good.

Ethan's statement shows the severity of education budget cuts on the working conditions of teachers in comparison to the past. Like many teachers quoted in previous chapters, however, when comparing this situation to other areas, he points out being better off in some ways. However, when teachers made comparisons to the past, they did not point out ways in which they were better off now than they used to be. This shows one way in which relative deprivation to the past was potentially more powerful as a grievance than comparisons with teachers in other states in eliciting protest strikes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this chapter align with classical conceptions of the role of relative deprivation in protest emergence, showing how relative deprivation to the past played a role as a powerful grievance. Teachers made it clear that they were relatively deprived compared to the past in various ways and that this was important to the emergence of protest strikes in their areas. However, since experiences with relative deprivation to the past and realizations of how bad things had gotten were different from teacher to teacher, there were conversations and framing processes that needed to happen in order for a collective grievance to emerge. Nevertheless, regardless of years teaching, experiences of relative deprivation to the past were widely felt and recognized as an important factor in the protest strikes.

Teacher leaders described numerous ways in which they were relatively deprived compared to the past, related to autonomy, classroom resources, unpaid tasks, salaries in relation to inflation, workload, and respect, etc. Many of these factors made their job or even ability to survive as a teacher much harder. Twyla and Angus's work curating materials for their classes due to insufficient or nonexistent resources mimics what a college professor has to do for their classes. And, of course they are not paid for this extra work. Teachers are also not paid for taking over other teachers' classes when substitutes are unavailable as described by Ethan and, in a previous chapter, Sheena. Ethan also described being designated the task of serving as a crossing guard, which used to be a paid position at his school. Further, keeping up with new initiatives and increased required meetings in comparison to the past not only increased teachers' workload, but also assaulted their autonomy. This assault on autonomy in comparison to the past was frequently mentioned by teacher leaders as a key grievance motivating their protest strikes and for some, like Patricia, it was the key grievance she recognized shared among teachers in advance of the strikes. New teachers, like Patricia and also Mike, even experienced decreasing autonomy in their first couple of years on the job.

As mentioned above, decreasing autonomy of teachers over time has been documented in the literature dating back to at least the mid-1980s. Peterson (1987) linked this decrease in autonomy to increasing computerization and overreliance on data which strains the relationship between teachers and administration. This attempt to create a "science of teaching" (Casey) that views teachers and students solely as "data points" (Naomi) was extremely prevalent in the narratives of participants.

These assaults on autonomy directly affect the lived experiences of teachers by creating more work for them, as described above. What this chapter shows is the power of this lived

experience grievance. Teachers are able to recognize relative deprivation compared to the past because of the rapid rate of a decrease in autonomy that teachers have experienced. This allows teachers to make comparisons to the past, even if only a few years ago, when they had more autonomy.

As this and the previous chapter has shown, the combination between a lived experience grievance and relative deprivation seems to be especially powerful in eliciting protest strikes. In fact, my analysis reveals three instances of this. First, economic grievances such as those that describe not being able to survive on a teacher salary; as connected to quotidian disruption (Snow et al. 1998); were very prevalent in the narratives of teachers (and demonstrated in all three of my analyses chapters in this dissertation). Second, the relative deprivation experienced in comparison with nearby districts whose relative advantage affected the lived experiences of, and disrupted the quotidian of, teachers in relatively deprived districts. And, third, relative deprivation to the past was directly connected to the lived experience of teachers who were able to make comparisons with themselves or the collective in the past. Lived experiences, including involving relative deprivation, seem to be especially powerful in eliciting protest strikes whereby teachers are able to understand, in an intimate way, how things can be better.

In this chapter, we see a unanimous understanding among participants that things had gotten worse for teachers in their district in advance of the protest strikes. Even if teachers were too new to experience vastly better days, they knew they existed. Thus, efforts at directing framing centered on relative deprivation to the past at newer teachers, as described by Angus, may have been unnecessary or misdirected. In fact, as the "frog in the pot of boiling water" references made by Kevin, Ada, and Anne showed, it was often more veteran teachers who may have gotten used to the deteriorating conditions and, as described by Ada, "didn't realize how

bad things had gotten." Some teachers needed a wake-up call of sorts. This wake-up call sometimes came in the form of outrage of newer teachers, expressing shock at the horrific working conditions that they came into, asking questions about the way things used to me to the veteran teachers, and having conversations about how bad things had actually gotten in comparison to the past. This not only opened the eyes of more veteran teachers to just how "crazy" (Ada) their role had become, but also illuminated to newer teachers how things used to be better and could actually improve. These conversations, as well as direct experiences with nearby districts, as described in the previous chapter, showed teachers that better conditions were possible, and exactly how this improved situation could look within the context that they were currently embedded in (Piven and Cloward 1977).

Important to these conversations was, as also described by Ada, the fact that newer teachers frequently have increased options, in comparison to more veteran teachers, to move districts or leave the profession which made them more willing to take a bold stance. It should be noted that the majority of the teacher leaders who had served short times in their districts that I interviewed, including Ethan and Patricia, quoted in this chapter, did end up leaving the profession after leading the protest strikes in their areas. Understanding potential connections between activism and attrition is something that I hope to explore in future research (especially since it relates directly to my own personal story as a teacher activist as briefly described above).

This chapter shows that relative deprivation to the past served a vital role in the protest strikes in 2018 and 2019. These comparisons were consistently described as important factors (and sometimes the most important) factor in these strikes. Relative deprivation to the past may serve as a more important grievance than relative deprivation to others since all teachers in a particular area have the same, very proximate reference group. This reference may have even

been themselves years ago. The ability to compare the way in which one's lived experience changed over time and reflect back on when times were better was powerful for teachers. Also powerful was the ability to share this grievance with a collective whose lived experiences were impacted in a similar way, regardless of whether their "good old days" (as described by Ada) aligned in terms of experience. There was an understanding among teachers of how things used to be in their district and how their lived experiences were different, and unacceptable, now.

This chapter, thus, shows an important way in which classical conceptions of relative deprivation hold as an important grievance eliciting protest strikes. It is my hope that scholars in the future will seriously consider relative deprivation in contemporary social movement studies. My study shows the importance of this theory in a widespread and impactful movement.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation unpacks the black box of relative deprivation in relation to protest emergence. I find that teachers described relative deprivation to others and the past and that these comparisons identify inequities faced by teachers. I also find that the role of relative deprivation in generating contemporary teacher protest strikes varies by type of relative deprivation. Specifically, I identify two processes by which relative deprivation led to the protest strikes: 1) as an organically-emerging grievance felt by all teachers (both teacher leaders and rank-and-file teachers) that directly motivated the protest strikes and 2) through effective framing of relative deprivation by teacher leaders. Both of these processes occurred simultaneously.

In this conclusion, I will first summarize and nuance the main findings of this dissertation. Then, I will describe some major contributions of this study. Finally, I will discuss limitations of this study and opportunities for future research.

SUMMARY

When describing relative deprivation to others, teachers described comparisons to other teachers and to similarly-educated professionals. When making comparisons to other teachers, teachers made comparisons with teachers both near and far. When making comparisons with teachers nearby, teacher-leaders described deleterious effects of living near relatively-advantaged districts often due to many teachers leaving their district in order to work at the nearby relatively-advantaged districts. Teachers also had an in-depth understanding of the way that things could be better due to the proximity of these relatively advantaged districts and conversations with former colleagues who have moved to these districts. When making comparisons with teachers further away, teachers recognized that they were relatively advantaged in some ways, but also relatively

deprived in others. There was an overwhelming sense of solidarity with teachers across the nation. Teachers also made comparisons with similarly-educated professionals and expressed that they were relatively deprived compared to these other professions. Teachers automatically linked this relative deprivation to gender inequity whereby they recognized that the reason for this relative deprivation was due to the feminized nature of the teaching profession. Teachers also described relative deprivation to the past in relation to numerous aspects such as autonomy, salary (especially as adjusted for inflation), and course materials.

The role of relative deprivation in contemporary teacher protest strikes is complex. In alignment with classical conceptions of relative deprivation in contemporary teacher strikes, relative deprivation did often serve as a grievance motivating protest strikes. It operated in this way when directly connected to the lived experiences of teachers, which was often a result of the effects of geographical nearness or experience with relatively-advantaged districts. Relative deprivation to the past also appeared to serve as a powerful grievance motivating protest strikes and teacher leaders' descriptions of relative deprivation were inextricably linked to their protest strikes.

I also find that framing served as a key mechanism that allowed various forms of relative deprivation to generate protest strikes. This aligns with Gamson's (1992) assertion that grievances do not inherently lead to protest and Klandersman's (1984) claim that relative deprivation among individuals does not immediately lead to group agreement. Thus, framing relative deprivation was necessary to make the situation clear (Klandersman 1984; Schwartz, 1988; Snow 2004). In the narratives of teacher leaders, I saw a concerted effort to do this by strategically framing relative deprivation in ways to build consensus and collective grievances.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

My study has several main contributions. First, my research reinvigorates the role of relative deprivation in movement emergence. I find that relative deprivation is a key factor in this recent wave of teacher protest strikes. Thus, my paper advances social movement theory by showing how relative deprivation is, indeed, still useful in contemporary movements.

Second, empirical social movement research has not yet examined the connection between framing and relative deprivation leading to mobilization. Rather, social movement studies on relative deprivation have focused on understanding only the direct link between relative deprivation and social movement emergence or participation (e.g., Aberle 1966; Bowen et al. 1968; Crawford and Naditch 1970; Davis 1959; Feierabend et al. 1969; Foster and Matheson 1995). The narratives of my participants provide insight into the ways in which relative-deprivation focused framing was utilized in the contemporary wave of teacher strikes. I show that relative-deprivation framing was an important mechanism that generated teacher protest strikes. Specifically, teacher leaders generated frames centered on relative deprivation that they presented to rank-and-file teachers. Through frame resonance (Snow et al. 1998) and alignment (Ketelaars 2016), these frames generated or intensified grievances among rank-and-file teachers that, according to teacher leaders, brought them on board with the activism and made the strikes possible.

Another novel contribution of my study is identifying variation with regard to the effects of relative deprivation based on the nearness of the reference group in generating protest strikes. My study is especially useful in understanding this variation because teachers described the effects of relative deprivation in comparison to teachers near and far. My study points to the power of nearby reference groups in generating grievances leading to collective action.

Fourth, social movement relative deprivation studies have generally taken two primary forms: historical case study analyses (e.g., Aberle 1966; Davis 1959) or multivariate analyses of societal or individual data (e.g., Bowen et al. 1968; Crawford and Naditch 1970; Feierabend et al. 1969; Geschwender and Singer 1970; Gurr 1969; Gurr 1970, and, more recently, Foster and Matheson 1995). A dearth of qualitative social movement research analyzing protest emergence centering on the narratives of individuals is apparent in relative deprivation literature, but qualitative methods are necessary to fully understand this social-psychological phenomenon. My study fills this gap through an analysis of the narratives of teacher leaders participating in and leading the recent wave of teacher strikes. This method is particularly useful in understanding this phenomenon because it allows for an understanding of the motivations of the participants and leaders through the words of leaders. Specifically, it allows for an understanding of if and how relative deprivation led to protest strike emergence.

Finally, my research makes an important connection between lived-experience grievances centered on relative deprivation and quotidian disruption to protest strikes. My findings show that these types of grievances were particularly important for the emergence of contemporary teacher protest strikes.

LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As mentioned above, an important limitation of this study is that it only considers the perspectives of teacher leaders since I do not interview teachers that were not leaders of their protest strikes. This likely impacted my results and, had I interviewed rank-and-file teachers, I may have observed a different perspective. For example, rank-and-file teachers may not understand how, specifically, the protest strikes emerged within the area. However, they would

be able to speak to their own participation in the strikes from the perspective of someone not directly involved in the process of bringing the protest strike to fruition. The perspective of rank-and-file teachers is valuable and I would be interested in interviewing rank-and-file teachers in the future. I expect if I do so, I may obtain more information about how relative deprivation affected their decision to join the strikes. I think some variation between the narratives of teacher leaders and rank-and-file teachers could potentially exist. For example, rank-and-file teachers may describe relative deprivation to teachers in others states and similarly-educated professionals as more important to protest strike emergence than did teacher leaders because they may have had these grievances generated from the extensive framing that teacher leaders put forth centered on these forms of relative deprivation.[14] I hope that I will be able to understand this variation in future research. However, a potential challenge of including rank-and-file teachers in my data would be identifying rank-and-file teachers who participated in the strikes since I found that even those teachers mentioned in news articles as participating in the strikes tended to be leaders. It appeared as though those willing to speak with the media and/or were tasked with this position likely played a leadership role in the movement.

This study is limited in that it only considers teacher protests in the United States and not worldwide. It should be noted that 2018 and 2019 teacher protests also occurred in South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, Oceania, and Mexico (London 2019; Webb 2019). An

[14] Frames connected to relative deprivation to the past were also extensively presented, but this also was consistently identified as a grievance motivating the strikes. So, I do not expect as much variation between leaders and non-leaders with regard to this type of relative deprivation.

opportunity for future research lies in examining and possibly comparing these worldwide protests to discern whether similar grievances gave rise to the protests.

Another limitation of this study is that it only considers teacher strikes in districts with traditional public schools and not charter school districts. This is a limitation because at least one large-scale charter school strike took place within my timeframe of focus. Teachers within the Acero charter school network in Chicago staged a protest which closed at least 15 charter schools toward the end of the 2018 fall semester (Goldstein 2018). Understanding mobilization among charter school educators is another opportunity for future research.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation shows that teachers described experiencing various forms of relative deprivation to others and to the past that led to protest strikes. It also shows that the role of relative deprivation in generating contemporary teacher protest strikes varied by type of relative deprivation and that relative deprivation was strategically framed by teacher leaders to bring teachers on board with the movement and make the protest strikes possible. Overall, this research is a valuable step forward in research on relative deprivation which should be of interest to social movement, education, work, and social psychology scholars as well as anyone interested in how the unprecedented wave of recent teacher activism came to fruition.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Participants

Pseudonyms	Strike Scale	Region	Gender
Ada	Multiple district	South	Woman
Adela	Multiple district	West	Woman
Angus	Multiple district	West	Man
Anne	Multiple district	West	Woman
Bettina	Statewide	South	Woman
Carlotta	Multiple district	West	Woman
Casey	Single district	South	Woman
Christine	Multiple district	South	Woman
Drew	Statewide	South	Man
Ethan	Statewide	West	Man
Fern	Statewide	South	Woman
George	Single district	West	Man
Helen	Single district	South	Woman
James	Multiple district	West	Man
Janis	Statewide	South	Woman
Jerry	Multiple district	West	Man
Ian	Single district	West	Man
Jordan	Single district	West	Nonbinary
Kathy	Multiple district	West	Woman
Kevin	Multiple district	South	Man
Louise	Statewide	South	Woman
Margaret	Statewide	South	Woman
Mike	Multiple district	South	Man
Naomi	Statewide	West	Woman
Olive	Statewide	South	Woman
Penn	Statewide	West	Man
Patricia	Statewide	South	Woman
Rowe	Single district	West	Man
Sam	Single district	West	Man
Sarah	Single district	West	Woman
Sheena	Single district	West	Woman
Twyla	Multiple district	South	Woman
Vera	Multiple district	West	Woman
Willa	Multiple district	South	Woman
Zachary	Single district	West	Man

Figure 1: Relative Deprivation Signs

Figure 2: U.S. Census Regional Divisions

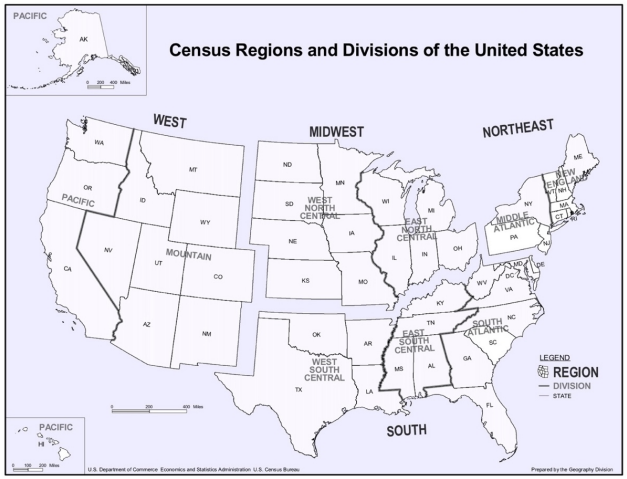


Figure 3: Theorized Model of Protest Strike Emergence

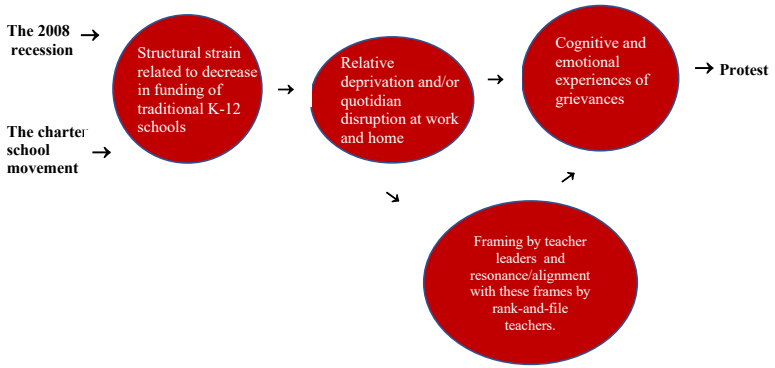
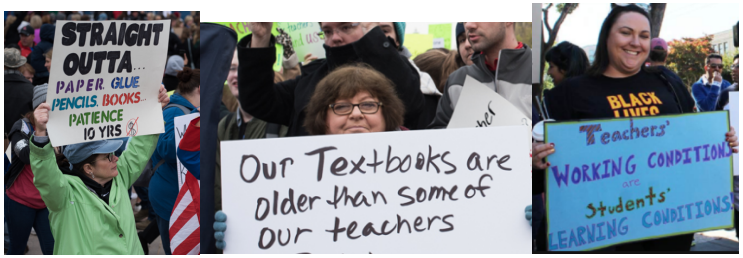


Figure 4: Subsistence-Based Signs

Figure 5: Working Conditions Signs



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

An Overview of Teacher Protest Strikes Occurring in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 School Years

The contemporary unprecedented wave of teacher protests began in the spring of 2018 when teachers in West Virginia, Kentucky, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Arizona, Colorado, and North Carolina went on strike. Teachers in two more states, Washington and Illinois, followed suit in the fall semester of 2018. Then the spring semester of 2019 saw another massive wave of teacher strikes in California, Virginia, Colorado, West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and New Jersey. Thus, this project focuses on the school years of 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, and, more specifically, three semesters, spring 2018, fall 2018, and spring 2019, because it is during these periods when the strikes occurred (there were no known public-school teacher strikes in 2017) (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019). Below is a timeline of strikes in these semesters and, following this, a description of strikes within each above-mentioned state. To the best of my knowledge, this is an exhaustive list. The purpose of this section is to give an overview of these K-12 teacher protests to provide context regarding the case of focus of this project.

Chronological Timeline

Spring semester 2018

- Early February 2018: Small walkouts begin in Southern West Virginia
- February 22, 2018: Statewide West Virginia teacher strike officially begins
- March 7, 2018: Statewide West Virginia teacher strike ends
- March 16, 2018: Teachers in Jersey City walk out

- March 30, 2018: Several school districts in Kentucky cancel classes due to teachers protesting a pension reform bill
- April 2, 2018: Oklahoma strike begins
- April 2, 2018: All public schools in Kentucky are closed, however, some are on spring break
- April 9, 2018: Teachers in Arizona begin “walk-ins”
- April 12, 2018: Oklahoma strike ends
- April 13, 2018: More than 30 county school districts close in KY to protest pension bill
- April 16, 2018: 400 teachers rally at the Colorado state Capitol closing schools in Englewood. Teachers from Denver Public Schools and Boulder Valley School Districts also walked out in order to participate in the rally.
- April 20, 2018: Teachers in Pueblo Colorado vote to go on strike
- April 26, 2018: Most districts in the state of Arizona go on strike.
- April 27, 2018: Teachers in some Colorado districts go on strike
- May 3, 2018: Large-scale strike in Arizona ends
- May 12, 2018: Colorado strike ends
- May, 16, 2018: North Carolina teachers stage the “March for Students and Rally for Respect Wednesday” closing 42 school districts

Fall semester 2018

- September 10-14, 2018: Teachers strike in at least 14 districts in Tacoma, Washington
- December 5-10, 2018: Teachers strike in Geneva Illinois

Spring semester 2019

- January 14-22, 2019: Teachers in Los Angeles strike

- January 28, 2019: Teachers in numerous Virginia counties strike
- February 11-13, 2019: Teachers in Denver strike
- February 19-20, 2019: Teachers in West Virginia strike (all counties except one)
- February 21, 2019: Teachers in Oakland go on strike
- February 28, 2019: Jefferson and Fayette County Public Schools cancel classes in Kentucky due to significant teacher absences.
- March 7, 2019: Jefferson, Oldham, Bullitt, and Meade County Public Schools cancel classes in Kentucky due to significant teacher absences.
- May 1, 2019: Teachers strike in North and South Carolina
- May 3, 2019: Over 1,400 Nashville teachers call in sick to protest
- May 8, 2019: Oregon teachers walk out in 25 districts forcing 600 schools to close.
- May 6, 2019: Over 1,000 teachers in Nashville call in sick
- May 16, 2019: Over 1,000 teachers march in Nashville
- May 20- June 7,2019: Teacher strike in New Haven Unified School District, CA
- June 10, 2019: The Franklin Lakes School District in New Jersey holds a one-day strike

Brief Description of 2018 and 2019 Teacher Strikes (in Alphabetical Order by State)

Arizona

The week following the culmination of Oklahoma protests, Arizona teachers began staging "walk-ins," organized by the recently-formed Facebook advocacy group, Arizona Educators United, whereby teachers and other supporters would gather in front of schools before the morning bell and walk in together in a show of solidarity (Kuhn 2018). On April 13th, in order to avert a strike, the Arizona governor, Doug Ducey, promised teachers a 10% raise in 2019 and a 20% raise in 2020 but could not detail a plan for how this was to be funded

(Fernández Campbell 2018). This precipitated a large-scale walkout beginning on April 26th when the majority of school districts in the state went on strike. The strike ended on May 3rd when a new budget was passed with a clear allocation for teacher salaries of almost 273 million dollars within education funding for the state (Altavena, Ruelas, and Leingang 2018).

California

Oakland

On February 21, 2019 Oakland teachers went on strike for higher pay to accommodate the cost of living in Oakland, smaller class sizes, more support staff, and a stop to planned school closures and consolidations to accommodate additional charter schools. (Fernández Campbell 2019). It appears as though the district attempted to keep schools open during this time, but only 3-6% of the district's 37,000 students showed up for school throughout the seven days of the strike which resulted in a significant loss of state funding for the district (an estimated seven million dollars) since this funding relies on attendance numbers (Freedberg and Harrington 2019). Teachers returned to class on Monday, March 4th after an agreement was reached with the district which included an immediate 3% bonus and an 11% guaranteed salary increase over the next four years, phased-in reductions in class sizes, a pause in school closures for the next 5 months, reduced caseloads for counselors and special education teachers, and an agreement to vote on a charter-school moratorium (Harrington 2019).

Los Angeles

On January 14, 2019 Tens of thousands of teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School district, the second largest school district in the United States, went on strike to stand up for more pay, a stop to charter school proliferation, and higher-quality education for students (Sakuma

2019). More than a million students were out of classes for six school days as over 30,000 teachers, librarians, and school counselors picketed outside of schools (Medina and Goldstein 2019; Sakuma 2019). A deal was reached when a plan was negotiated to provide a six percent raise to teachers, hire more full-time nurses and librarians, cut the number of standardized tests in half, vote on a resolution to cap the number of allotted charter schools, and also limit class sizes (Medina and Goldstein 2019). The strike officially ended on January 22, 2019.

New Haven Unified School District

On May 20, 2019, more than 600 teachers and other staff working in the New Haven Unified School District serving the cities of Union City and South Heyward in the San Francisco Bay area went on strike (Geha 2019a). Teachers demanded a 10% raise over the next two years to allow teachers to live in an area with an ever-increasing cost of living (McBride 2019). This strike lasted 14 days and schools remained open even though a small proportion of students showed up for classes. Those that did come to school reported that they watched movies (Geha 2019b). The strike ended on June 7th, 2019 with an agreement that gives teachers a 3% raise and 2.5% bonus for the current school year, and an additional 1% raise in the 2019-2020 school year (Jacobson 2019).

Sacramento

On April 11, 2019, Sacramento teachers went on strike after 92% of the members of the Sacramento City Teachers Association voted for this action (Morrar 2019). The impetus for this strike was a budget crisis where teachers were at risk of being laid off and the entire school system was at risk of being taken over by the state. This strike was also fomented by a breach of

contract whereby the district promised more students services in exchange for teachers switching to a health insurance program that was less expensive for the district. The teachers made the switch, but the district failed to provide the promised services (Bartolone 2019). Schools stayed open during this one-day strike (Jacobson, 2019). It does not seem as though any concrete gains were made by teachers as the district kept reiterating that it was operating under a 35 million-dollar deficit (Sacramento Unified School District 2019).

Colorado

On April 16, 2018, 400 teachers rallied at the Colorado state Capitol closing schools in Englewood. Teachers from Denver Public Schools and Boulder Valley School Districts also walked out in order to participate in the rally. The purpose of the rally was to support the Colorado Education Association (CEA)'s Lobby Day where CEA leaders met with legislators and then appeared before a hearing of the House Finance Committee to discuss changes to teachers' retirement plans (Whaley 2018a).

Then, on April 20, 2018, members of the local union affiliate of the CEA, the Pueblo Education Association, officially voted to go on strike the following week with a vote of 417 to 24 (Whaley 2018b). One of the major refrains of teachers explaining their reasons for this vote was the large amounts of money that they pay out of pocket for classroom resources with a salary that does not keep pace with this spending (Whaley 2018b). This could potentially be fueled by a widely publicized study conducted by the CEA and presented to Colorado legislators which found that teachers, on average, spend $656 a year for students' classroom resources while, when adjusting for inflation, experiencing a 17% pay cut (Whaley 2018b).

Further, Pueblo teachers were particularly distressed after the city board of education rejected a 2% pay increase to adjust for increasing costs of living as recommended by a third-party fact finder. The board also approved a four-day school week for the upcoming school year leading to long workdays for teachers and childcare concerns. The board attempted to justify both decisions by stressing that the district was in a tough financial situation with a 3.6 million-dollar deficit (Worthington 2018).

The following week, teachers in many others school districts joined Pueblo in strikes beginning on Thursday, April 26th and intensifying the following day, Friday, April 27th, descending on the Capitol to attempt to persuade lawmakers to increase school funding. These strikes closed nearly 30 school districts (Whaley 2018b), including the largest ten districts which themselves educate over 500,000 students. Teachers did not get the guarantee of funding that they hoped for and, thus, continued to strike, led by Colorado Pueblo Schools, until May 12th when lawmakers agreed to give them a 2% pay increase (Fay 2018).

The following year, more than 2000 teachers in Denver went on strike again for increased funding and in protest against the subjective and highly variable merit pay system (Fernández Campbell 2019). Due to this strike, many teachers and students were absent February 11-14, but the district used substitutes, paraprofessionals and central office administrative staff to keep school open for all grades except preschool. (Asmar 2019). However, students that went to school reported a lack of learning and chaos due to understaffed classrooms (Asmar 2019) A deal was struck in the early morning hours of February 14th (Cramer 2019) which gave teachers a significant pay increase (an average of 11.7% increase along with annual increases in accordance with cost of living—Fernández-Campbell 2019) and a salary system that was more seniority based rather than merit based (Asmar 2019).

Illinois

Geneva School District

On December 5, 2018, teachers in Geneva School District, 304, in Geneva, Illinois, a city about 40 miles from Chicago, went on strike. All of the members of the local teacher union of Geneva Education Association (over 450 teachers), were estimated to have been a part of the picket line which formed outside of Geneva High School (Cammenga 2018; Guerrero 2018). Classes were cancelled across the district, affecting almost 6,000 students, as teachers demanded salary increases and a different salary schedule than the district was trying to promote which, the teachers believed, would not retain teachers nor reward veteran teachers (Guerrero 2018). Classes resumed on December 11th after a tentative agreement was reached between the union and district which allowed for compensation for advanced degrees and a more traditional salary schedule (Torres, 2018).

New Jersey

Jersey City

On March 16, 2018, Jersey City teachers walked out to protest rising healthcare costs and an expired contract. This came after failed negotiations between the Jersey City Education Association and the Jersey City Board of Education (McDonald 2018a). Schools were on a half-day schedule because of the strikes. Teachers went back to school on Monday after a judge ordered that they had to return by law (McDonald 2018b) and a tentative agreement was reached between the union and the school board (McDonald 2018c).

Franklin Lakes School District

At Franklin Lakes School District in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, a borough about 25 miles north of New Jersey, approximately 270 teachers went on a one-day strike led by the local union, Franklin Lakes Education Association (Jacobson 2019) on June 10, 2019. The main reasons that the teachers went on strike centered on the fact that they had been working with no contract for two years and healthcare costs were increasingly unaffordable (NJEA 2019). This walkout closed all four schools within the district and while the union threatened that the strike could last all week, it only lasted one day. The union and school board reached a tentative agreement for a four-year contract at 2am Tuesday morning, June 11th (Kanzler and Stoltz 2019).

Kentucky

On March 30, 2018, several school districts in Kentucky cancelled classes due to teachers protesting a pension reform bill (Mattingly 2018; Sayers 2018). This continued on Monday, April 2nd. All public schools in Kentucky were closed on this date, but the majority of them were on Spring Break. Nevertheless, the remaining 21 school districts that were open closed due to teacher absences and/or to allow teachers to freely attend the rally at the capitol to protest the pension reform bill (Novelly, McLaren, and Watkins 2018).

Another massive wave of school closures occurred in Kentucky on April 13, 2018 following an announcement by the Kentucky Education Association for a "day of action" which called for teachers to use any available leave time to make a trip to the Capitol to protest the pension bill which was signed into law the previous Tuesday by Governor Matt Bevin (Costello and Sayers 2018). This new law no longer guarantees defined retirement benefits to new

teachers and requires some teachers to increase the amount of money they pay into their health care benefits while in retirement (McLaren and Watkins 2018).

The following year, grassroot teacher group "KY 120 United" called on teachers to protest House Bill 525, which proposed a restructuring of the group that controls teacher pensions, at the Kentucky state capitol, requesting that teachers attend the House hearing the Bill (WDRB 2019), which on February 28, 2019, resulted in a closing of Jefferson County Public Schools the largest school district in Kentucky, which educates almost 100 thousand students in the Louisville area, Fayette County Public Schools, the second largest school district in Kentucky, which educates over 40,000 students in the Lexington area and six other Kentucky school districts (Knight and McLaren 2019; McLaren 2019; Niche 2019). This was not supported by union leaders or school administrators, many of whom released statements dissuading teachers from participating (McLaren 2019). Teachers also protested on March 6th - 13th, 2019 (McLaren 2019) closing school districts such as Jefferson County and Oldham County (Beam 2019 reports that at least four districts were closed but it is not clear which districts were indeed closed beyond the aforementioned two) while other schools sent teacher delegates to protest in order to keep schools open, such as Fayette County and Bullitt County (Beam 2019). There were many reasons behind these March protests but perhaps the largest was House Bill 205 which facilitates access to private schools for particular groups of students. Teachers also protested on these days in opposition to the aforementioned House Bill 525. They chanted so loudly that they disrupted house hearings (Beam 2019).

North Carolina

On May, 16, 2018: North Carolina teachers staged the "March for Students and Rally for Respect Wednesday" in order to lobby the state legislature at the General Assembly in Raleigh (Ginsburg 2018). This closed 42 of the 115 school districts. However, since these school districts were focused in more urban areas of the state, this ended up affecting over two thirds of students (Bauerlein 2018). Teachers primarily cited funding as the reason for this work stoppage, requesting not only increased funding to improve teacher pay, but also student resources, staff compensation, and infrastructure (Yan 2018).

Thousands of teachers took a personal day to attend this rally (Ginsberg 2018) with the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimating that 123,000 teachers did not show up for work on this day in protest (2019). While teachers were striking, Democratic governor, Roy Cooper, announced to the crowd a plan which would tax the wealthiest corporations in the state in order to pay for teacher raises, promising an 8% average salary increase for all teachers (Elk 2018). This strike only lasted one day, as planned.

The following year, North Carolina teachers, joined by South Carolina teachers (as described in a following section), went on strike again, converging in Raleigh at the Capitol building (Balingit 2019) on May 1, 2019. North Carolina teachers demanded pay increases for experienced and highly-educated teachers, who barely saw an increase in light of the protests last year, Medicare expansion, and a support-staff minimum wage of $15 (Waggoner 2019). It is estimated that over 92,700 teachers attended this event (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019).

Oklahoma

A few weeks after the groundbreaking 2018 strike ended in West Virginia, K-12 educators in Oklahoma, organized through their Facebook group, Oklahoma Teachers United, walked out of the classroom. Teachers did this after legislators signed into law a $6,000 (~16%) raise. Oklahoma teachers had asked, however, for a $10,000 raise (Goldstein 2018a) and, like their West Virginia counterparts, did not want to give in to an offer lower than originally requested. They also wanted an increase in per-student spending because Oklahoma ranks the lowest in the nation and stated that they would not be satisfied with solely a pay raise for teachers (Lyons 2018). Thus, teachers walked out across the state on April 2nd and schools remained closed for the following nine days. During the strike an estimated 30,000 educators convened at the state capitol and schools for about 75% of students were closed (Fernández-Campbell 2018). Teachers returned to school on April 13th, without many additional gains. (Andone, Baldacci, Smith, and Jackson 2018) Rather, they endorsed a shift in focus to elect pro-education candidates in November (Schreiner and Beam 2018).

Oregon

On May 8, 2019, Oregon teachers staged a "Day of Action" whereby tens of thousands of teachers and their allies protested in at least six sites across the state (https://www.may8forstudents.org/; Weiner 2019). This resulted in the closing of 600 schools within 25 school districts across the state. The largest district to close was Portland School District which serves almost 50,000 students in 81 schools (Portland Public Schools 2019).

Interestingly, Oregon's teachers did not generally cite pay as one of their grievances, as was common among protesting teachers in other locales (Yan 2019). Rather, a strong student-

centered narrative pervaded these strikes as visible in the website url for this day of action, https://www.may8forstudents.org/. Student-centric grievances expressed on this website include smaller class sizes for more individualized attention, more school counselors, nurses, social workers, librarians, and support staff to augment student success, full funding and restoration of electives such as music, art, and physical education so that students could have a more well-rounded educational experience.

South Carolina

As mentioned previously, teachers in South Carolina also went on strike on May 1st to demand more investment in education in order to reduce class sizes, pay teachers more, and hire additional support staff (Conley 2019). Approximately 10,000 teachers swarmed the state capitol grounds in Columbia (Balingit 2019) and seven school districts cancelled classes for the day. These closures affected approximately 123,000 students (Bowers 2019). This protest was led by the grassroots group who called themselves SC for Ed (Conley 2019). This group, like many other grassroots groups (such as those who led strikes in Arizona and West Virginia) organized on social media (Bowers 2019). In the center of the event, organizers handed out contact information for legislators and encouraged protestors to contact them daily (Bowers 2019). Teachers threatened a follow-up protest in the fall if their demands are not met (Bowers 2019). This event was labeled with a hashtag #AllOutMay1 (Gaither 2019).

This was the second protest event of the year for South Carolina teachers. On January 29, 2019, some teachers took a personal day off school in order to meet with lawmakers and call for a 10% blanket salary increase. They called this event "Money Matters Lobby Day" (Yan

2019). It does not appear that any schools closed on this day to accommodate teacher absences and teachers did not consider this action to be a walkout (Schecter and DaPrile 2019).

Tennessee

Nashville

In May 2019, teachers in Nashville staged a series of strikes. The first was took place on May 3, 2019 when 1,431 teachers did not come to work to request a pay raise higher than 3%, which was the amount proposed by the mayor's new budget (Taylor, Adams, and Nance 2019). While many teachers were out, including 88% of the teachers at McGavock High School, schools did not close (Yan and Burnside 2019). Rather, students were busied by watching movies or even doing karaoke (Taylor, Adams, and Nance 2019).

Over 1,000 teachers also called in sick on Monday, May 6th and again on Thursday May, 16th. A popular refrain among teachers was that they were sick of the low pay which is much lower than the national average teacher salary in a city with an ever-increasing cost of living (Yan and Burnside 2019). On Thursday, May 16th, teachers organized a day of action with rallies and a march through Nashville. This march was organized by a coalition of two grassroots groups who largely organized via Facebook—Sick MNPS teachers (otherwise known simply as "sick teachers") and Nashville Red4Ed. This action was strategically chosen to coincide with the first presentation of the new MNPS budget (with the aforementioned 3% cost of living increase) to Metro Council (White 2019).

Virginia

On Monday January 28, 2019, teachers in numerous Virginia counties went to the state capitol instead of their classrooms to call for more school funding (Guichard 2019) and support a bill proposed by Democratic Governor Ralph Northam which budgets a 5% teacher raise (Mattingly 2019). The rally at the state capitol followed a march of an estimated 2,500 teachers joined by 1,500 parents, students, and other allies (including Gov. Northam's wife) through the streets of Richmond (Mattingly 2019; Will 2019). The grassroots group, Virginia Educators United, planned this march, primarily through a closed Facebook group, similar to marches in other states such as West Virginia and Arizona. Some of the funding-related demands included hiring more teachers to reduce class sizes, increasing the numbers of support staff, augmenting teacher pay, and making improvements to school facilities (Guichard 2019). While teachers were rallying, the House announced a 5% raise (Mattingly 2019).

It is difficult to ascertain which districts were affected by this because many districts including Arlington, Prince William and Henrico counties and Richmond had already scheduled a professional development day whereby students were previously given the day off of classes (Truong 2019). Because of this, leaders in some of these districts told teachers they could march without taking time off. Teachers in other districts were encouraged to take personal time off to attend the march (Mattingly 2019b). Organizers have said that this protest event was not intended to be a walkout or extended strike as witnessed in other locales such as West Virginia and Los Angeles.

Washington

A cancelled teacher training by teachers in Longview on August 23 was the way teacher strikes started in the fall of 2018 in Washington. This strike continued on the first scheduled day of the school year, August 29, following the lead of teachers who delayed their August 28 start date in Evergreen, Washougal, and Hockinson school districts. Also striking on August 29 were Vancouover, Battle Ground and Ridgefield School districts (McIntosh 2018). In the first week of September, teachers in Centralia, Tumwater, Stanwood-Camano, Rainier, and Tukwila school districts joined the strike (Quinlan 2018). That same week, local teacher unions in Tacoma and Puyallup districts voted overwhelmingly (98 and 97% in favor, respectively) to go on strike. Puyallup teachers began striking on Wednesday, September 5th and Tacoma teachers began striking on Thursday, September 6th, delaying the first day of the school year (Quinlan 2018) bringing the estimated number of striking teachers to 6,000 (Hackney and Yan 2018) Seattle teachers threatened to join the strikes, but a deal was reached to avert this (Hackney and Yan 2018).

End dates of the strikes varied district to district, but the longest lasting Washington strike was at Battle Ground which serves approximately 13,500 students (Gillespie 2018) . Their strike ended on September 17 after 13 days (NW Labor Press 2018). Insufficient salaries were the main reason attributed to these strikes (Quinlan 2018) and teachers only ceased striking after large pay increases were guaranteed.

West Virginia

West Virginia was the site of ostensibly the first teacher strike of this contemporary wave of protest. In early February 2018, West Virginia descendants of coal miners involved in

historical labor strikes began organizing small walkouts in southern West Virginia (Robertson and Bidgood 2018) with the first organized walkout occurring on February 2, 2018 in Charleston deemed "Fed-Up Friday" (Robertson and Bidgood 2018). Over the weeks following "Fed-Up Friday," the possibility of a statewide strike was discussed in the Facebook group, West Virginia Public Employees United, and union leaders organized votes to assess interest in this possibility (Quinn 2018). While this was occurring, additional counties of teachers rallied for higher wages at the state capitol on February 16, 2018 (McElhinny 2018). The following day, union leaders, having received vote tallies which indicated a favorable viewpoint towards the strikes(Quinn 2018), announced a statewide strike for the following Thursday and Friday (Robertson and Bidgood 2018). The day before the proposed strike, Republican Governor Jim Justice proposed a freeze on insurance rates and a 2% pay increase for the following school year with 1% raises for subsequent years, but this did nothing to stop the strike (Quinn 2018). Thus, the statewide strike took place as planned on February 22nd and 23rd and, since no gains were achieved, continued on throughout the next week. On Saturday, March 3rd, a bill was passed authorizing a 4% raise (Robertson and Bidgood 2018). However, teachers were not quelled by this, wanting to hold out for a 5% raise, increased funding for support staff, a tabling of charter-school legislation, and a freeze on insurance rates (Johnson 2018). Thus, schools in all 55 West Virginia counties were closed for nine days until March 7th, 2018 when the aforementioned demands were met. This closed all of the public schools in the state (Larimer 2018).

In 2019, West Virginia teachers went on strike again. On February 19th and 20th, schools in all countries except Putnam county (despite most teachers and 97% of students being absent) were closed. Putnam county was also unique because they did not pay striking teachers, regardless of whether they used a personal or a sick day (both considered paid time off), because

the district requires a "legitimate" reason for teachers to be absent and did not consider the protests as an adequate reason (WSAZ News Staff 2019). Because of the hostile attitude of administration towards striking teachers in Putnam County, teachers from across the state flocked to protest outside of these schools in support of striking Putnam county teachers (Litton 2019).

The reason for these strikes centered around fighting charter school expansion and efforts by West Virginia republicans to privatize education (Fernández Campbell 2019). Specifically, the strike was called for by union leaders following a vote by Republican senators for a bill that would allow for the first charter schools to open in West Virginia. This bill would divert already scarce funding away from public schools toward privately-operated charter schools. Further, this same bill would facilitate subjective processes for laying off teachers without regard for seniority (Fernández Campbell 2019). While House Democrats struck down this bill, teachers still went on strike due to the fear that this type of legislation could re-emerge, making sure that their voices were heard (Stanglin 2019).

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Grievances and Emotions

1. **Can you tell me what comes to mind when you think about the professional and personal situation of teachers working in your district before the strike/walkout?**

2. Can you tell me what comes to mind when you think about the professional and personal experience of teachers working in your school district in the weeks just before the decision to walkout/strike?

3. Can you describe the conversations that teachers were having with one another during the weeks just before the decision to strike/walkout?
    a. Where were these conversations taking place?

4. Could you walk me through what you remember about how the decision to strike/walkout was made?

5. **What do you think was the most important issue on teachers' minds in making the decision to walkout/strike?**
    a. What other issues were teachers talking about as important to their decision to strike/walkout.
        i. Examples of potential probing questions (depending on the information elicited so far, I may not probe about all these factors and/or may probe about other items that come up):
            1. What about economic factors?
            2. What about issues around autonomy or control of teachers' work?
            3. What about the charter school movement?
            4. What about student-centered factors?
            5. What about benefit-related factors?
            6. What about family and leisure time-related factors?
            7. What about other factors related to workplace conditions (such as poor infrastructure, textbooks, etc.)?
            8. What about issues related to gender inequality?

6. **What kinds of emotions were teachers expressing when reflecting on this issue?**
    a. How did they share their feelings about this?

Coordination and Communication

7. **How did teachers coordinate themselves to launch the walkout/strike?**

    a. What role did social media play in generating these walkouts/strikes?

    b. What role did teacher unions play in generating these walkouts/strikes?

Broader Support and Receptiveness

8. **Did teachers feel supported by others as they engaged in the walkout/strike? By whom?**
    a. What about by parents of children in the teachers' schools?
    b. What about by local elected officials?
    c. What about by state elected officials?
    d. What about by other groups in the local or state community?

Other Influences (Diffusion)

9. **What role did other strikes or activism play in the decision of teachers in your district to strike?**
    a. What about other teacher strikes elsewhere (in other districts, cities, or states)?
        i. How did teachers get information about other teacher strikes?
    b. What about other strikes/walkouts by other types of workers in your states/region, including in the past?
    c. What about larger, national-level activism or social movements?

Social Comparisons and Relative Deprivation

10. Earlier I asked you to tell me about what comes to mind when you think about the professional and personal experience of teachers working in your district. Now I want you to think about this in relation to other teachers. How would you compare the situation of teachers in your district with other teachers in your state?
    a. Did this play a role in influencing teachers' decision to strike/walkout? If so, how?

11. How would you compare the situation at work and at home of teachers in your district just before the strike/walkout to when you first started teaching?
    a. Did this play a role in influencing teachers' decision to strike/walkout? If so, how?
    b. What year did you start teaching full time?
    c. (If the teacher has been teaching since before 2008) How would you compare the situation at work and at home of teachers in your district or state (if teacher has moved districts) before and after the 2008 recession? Do you believe your district has fully recovered from the 2008 recession?

12. How would you compare the situation at work and at home of teachers in your state with teachers in other states?
    a. Did this play a role in influencing teachers' decision to strike/walkout? If so, how?

13. **How would you compare the situation at work and at home of teachers with other similarly-educated professionals?**

a. Did this play a role in influencing teachers' decision to strike/walkout? If so, how?
b. How has the situation of teachers in the state you were teaching in changed over time?
c. Do you believe that teachers are viewed as and treated like professionals? Has this changed over time?

The Larger Wave of Activism

14. Why do you think this unprecedented wave of teacher activism has occurred over the last couple of years?

Demographics

15. What role personally did you play in the strike/walkout in your district?

16. Are you a member of your local teacher union or professional organization?
    a. If yes, which national-level organization is this a part of (e.g., NEA or AFT)?
    b. If yes, how many years have you been a union member?
    c. If yes, do you currently or have you ever held office in the union?
    d. If no, why did you decide to not join the union?

17. Are you active in any other movements, organizations, or types of activism?

18. Growing up, were either or both of your parents union members?

19. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

20. How likely is it that you will still be teaching five years from now?

21. What is your highest degree?

22. What is your discipline and grade level?

23. How were you certified to teach?

24. In what year were you born?

25. How would you describe your:
    a. race/ethnicity?
    b. political attitudes?
    c. religious beliefs?
    d. gender identity?
    e. educational background?
    f. relationship status?

    i. [if partnered] Is your spouse/partner employed? If so, what do they do for work?

26. Do you have dependents (e.g., children or other relatives that you support)?

27. Do you hold other jobs in addition to teaching?

28. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss?

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear NAME,

I write to ask if you might be willing to be interviewed over the phone (or voice-only Zoom) for my PhD research at Vanderbilt University. This project investigates the circumstances leading to the teacher walkouts/strikes/sickouts over the last few years. I am inviting current and former teachers who were involved in local activism to be interviewed.

These interviews will be completely confidential and anonymous. If you are willing to be interviewed, your name, state, school, and district will not be revealed. If it is okay with you, I would like to record these interviews and use the transcripts for research purposes. If you would prefer for the interview to not be recorded, I will simply take hand-written notes.

These interviews generally last about an hour, but I am able to work with any amount of time that you have. If you are able to participate, I will provide a $20 e-gift card of your choice as a small token of my appreciation.

I know your time is very valuable and how busy teachers are (although I can't imagine what it is like during this crazy time). I was a K-12 teacher in Indiana for six years before beginning my graduate studies. I hope that you might be able to carve out a bit of time to help with my research. If you are willing to be interviewed or would like to ask questions about the study before deciding, you can reply to me in one of three ways: 1) reply to this email, 2) send an email from another email address to amanda.j.brockman@vanderbilt.edu, or 3) call/text me at 812-630-3403. Then, I will reach out to you to set up a time that is convenient for you to talk. I will be conducting these interviews throughout the semester, so we can schedule at a time that hopefully works well for you.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

Amanda

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