

# "No room. No pay. No time." : Teachers's work in a time of expanding roles: A contribution to overwork theory

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**“No Room. No Pay. No Time.”  
Teachers’ Work in a Time of  
Expanding Roles:  
A Contribution to Overwork Theory**

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## **Abstract**

This paper illuminates the tensions between the rhetoric and presumed rewards of an “expanded” conception of teachers’ work and the work demands and strains introduced by such a conception. Specifically, this paper draws on multi-day, 24-hour time and task diaries recorded by case study teachers, together with ethnographic interviews and observations, to illuminate the disjuncture between reform rhetoric and work place demands. I use these data to assess the usefulness of existing theories of overwork as they may apply to teachers and teaching. This paper suggests that teacher overwork is, in part, a result of the expansion of teacher work roles. The argument unfolds in three parts. First, teachers work roles have been expanded but structural supports for the expansion have been uneven. Second, the nature and extent of organizational support influences teacher experience of role expansion, and finally, teachers who embrace the expanded role conception strive to sustain it even in the absence of organizational supports. This results in overwork.<sup>1</sup> Current explanations of overwork do not adequately account for the case of teachers’ overwork.

## **The Teaching Workforce**

There are over two-and-a-half million K-12 teachers working at almost 90,000 public schools in America. As a profession, it makes up four percent of the civilian workforce. There are twice as many teachers as registered nurses and five times as many teachers as lawyers (Ingersoll, 2002). Seventy-five percent of teachers are women and the majority of those teachers have dependents. Public school teaching has traditionally been a major avenue to the middle class for many people. Although there is a large volume of research on teachers and teaching, almost none of it examines the lives of teachers beyond the classroom and the school or takes any account of the relationships between the workplace and family responsibilities.

In the public mind, and in the view of many scholars, teaching has been seen as easy work that is compatible with family life. However, in recent years the work demands on teachers have increased while the relative compensation of teachers – in relation to other professionals of comparable education - has decreased (Liu, Kardos, Kauffman, Peske, Johnson, 2000). This has led to increased occupational stress, tension in the negotiation of work-family balance and, I would argue, an increase in teacher attrition. The rates of teacher turnover are higher than in other occupations. While reports vary, most agree that 40-50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching. In 1994-95, 14.3 percent of all teachers left the profession. (In the mid 1990's, the turnover rate of registered nurses was 12 percent.) Only 24 percent of that turnover can be accounted for by retirements. A full 45 percent of teacher attrition (leaving the profession) and 33 percent of teacher migration (leaving one school for another) is credited to personal reasons like pregnancy, child-rearing and health problems (see Ingersoll, 2001).

## **Reforming Teachers Roles**

The media, many policy makers, and a general folkloric perspective often depict teaching as a low-demand occupation requiring little time and posing few difficulties. The argument goes something like this: Teachers, compared to other Americans, appear to have short work-days, free weekends and long summer holidays. Furthermore, tenure insulates teachers from job insecurity and allows them to keep their jobs regardless of competence, effort or investment. The

low pay and low status of teaching contributes to the sense that people who teach have few other options. Teaching emerges from these portraits as easy work with congenial working conditions.

Viewed solely from a contractual perspective, this portrait appears credible. Teachers' at a typical California high school are contracted to work for seven hours and fifteen minutes a day.<sup>2</sup> The instructional day starts at eight a.m. and ends at three p.m. The teachers' contract requires them to arrive at school ten minutes before the first bell, guarantees them a thirty minute duty free lunch, allows for two after-school meetings a month, mandates a shortened day when school-wide evening meetings are scheduled and ensures they receive four hundred and fifty minutes of preparation time a week. Based on these guidelines, a teacher could conceivably arrive at school at 7:50 a.m., teach three classes,<sup>3</sup> do all her planning and grading in her ninety-minute preparation period, and leave school five minutes after the final bell at about 3:05 p.m.

These working conditions are often said to make it an ideal women's – or more specifically – mothers' profession. And despite some increase in the numbers of male teachers, teaching is still predominately a female profession. In 1993-94, seventy-three percent of all teachers in America were female and just over forty-five percent of all new teachers had dependents (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000a. 2000b). Teaching is supposedly a good career for a mother because it allows her to: 1) be home after-school with her children, 2) be off work during her children's school vacations, 3) and move in and out of the profession with minimal negative consequences to income, status and skill (Lortie, 1975). Teaching, in this scenario, permits women to balance work and family.

Sociological studies of teaching as an occupation (Lortie, 1975) suggest that some women have been attracted to teaching precisely for its presumed compatibility with family life. Other studies, however, indicate that teachers who hold firmly to an "8 to 3" conception of teaching incur the contempt of their colleagues. Virtually all in-depth portraits of teachers' work show it to be difficult, complex and emotionally draining work entailing long out-of-classroom hours.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, contractual provisions represent an interesting window on the relationship between formal specifications and ordinary realities of teaching. In addition to specifying working hours and days, union contracts generally specify the number of students teachers' can

see in a day, the number of teaching minutes and the frequency and type of after-school activities they can be asked to perform. In fact, teachers dramatically slow and disrupt the work of a school when labor actions result in work that is in strict compliance with the terms of the contract, or simply “working to rule.” Eliminating the volunteer hours that teachers contribute to a school’s work has proven to be an effective bargaining tool in labor disputes (Bascia, 1994; Maran, 2000). Of course, the short-term effectiveness of “working to rule” also points to enduring labor conditions that work to extract large amounts of unpaid labor from teachers (See Connell, 1985).

Further, the expectations made of teachers are expanding. For at least two decades, advocates of teaching reforms – especially those focused on professionalization – have taken pride in a steady expansion of teachers’ work roles and responsibilities. Summing up these trends, Lieberman and Miller (2000) distinguish an “expanded” role in part on the basis of teachers’ leadership responsibilities and involvement in reform-oriented activity beyond the classroom. Teachers steward many aspects of the school including responsibilities like the school’s assessment systems, pedagogical practices, and curriculum development. They work collaboratively and seek to coordinate student experience across the school. These new social realities of teaching represent a dramatic shift in the work environment and expectations made on teachers (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: New Social Realities of Teaching**

| <b>From</b>            | <b>To</b>                        |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Individualism          | Professional Community           |
| Teaching at the center | Learning at the center           |
| Technical work         | Inquiry into practice            |
| Controlled work        | Accountability                   |
| Managed work           | Leadership                       |
| Classroom concerns     | Whole-school concerns and beyond |
| A weak knowledge base  | A broad knowledge base           |

(Source: Lieberman and Miller, 1999, p. 24)

In the United States, this expanded conception of teaching is a product of the education reform movement initiated by the 1983 National Department of Education report *A Nation at Risk* which called for a boosting of educational standards and increased forms of measurement to ensure achievement. This was soon followed by a Carnegie Report which situated teacher role and school structure at the center of this change process. *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1986) called for a new and expanded conception of the teacher role in schools. The schools it envisaged had teachers as decision-makers and administrative and reform leaders.

Education reformers have advocated for this expansion in the quest for increased teacher satisfaction and commitment. A desire to attract and retain well-educated, motivated and engaged teachers underlies many of these reforms. Reformers argue that teachers who collaborate in the leadership of the school, look for their professional development in the everyday collegial work of the school, and who see themselves as members of a whole school community, are more likely to remain engaged and committed to their work (Bryk and Driscoll 1988; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Miller, 1999).

However, the enactment of this expanded role differs greatly depending on the particulars of school organization, policy and practice. There is beginning to be some evidence that teachers who embrace the expanded role may experience greater satisfaction and commitment to the profession but they may also experience a work overload that exhausts their enthusiasm and erodes their commitment (Bartlett, 2001; Lohman and Woolf, 2001; VanVeen, Slegers and Bergen 2001). In this paper, I find that one factor influencing these differing responses is the organizational support for teachers' work. Schools that have integrated the expanded teaching role into the regular structure of the work day are more likely to sustain the engagement and commitment of their teachers; while schools that have layered the expanded aspects of the role onto an unaltered and already full traditional teaching schedule are more likely to overload and exhaust their teachers. The cases explored in this paper illuminate the differing teacher experience of the role expansion reforms as they are enacted in their respective work places and looks at why some teachers persist with the expanded role conception despite the lack of organizational support.

## Case Studies

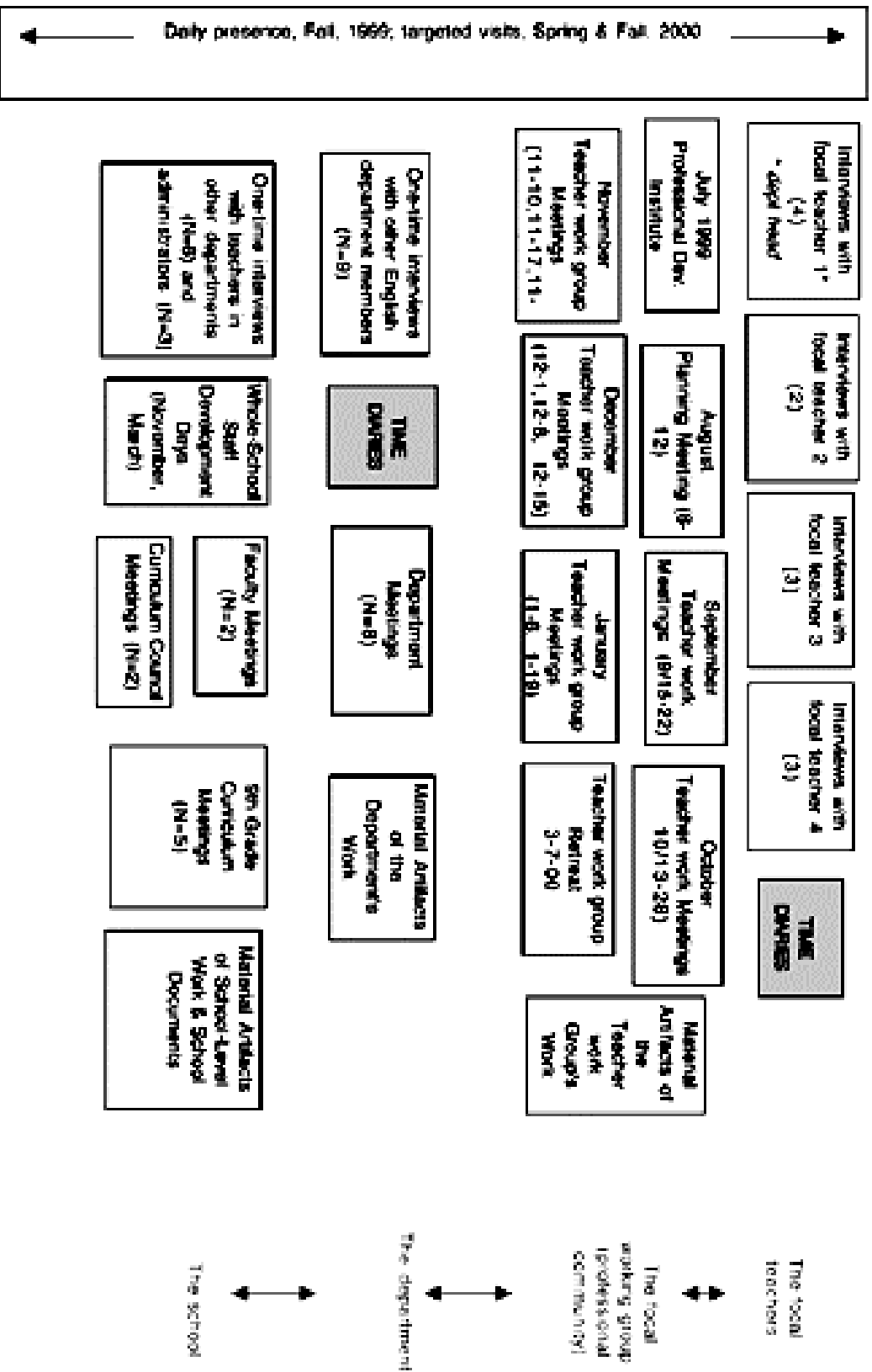
This paper highlights the work experiences of secondary school teachers in two California High Schools. To contextualize the work-lives of these teachers, I draw on the extensive qualitative and ethnographic data, collected over two years (1998-2000,) that traces the experience of teachers at East and South High Schools with interviews, observations, time diaries and document analysis. Teacher practice was sampled sequentially – creating a stream of practice sample that permits a highly contextualized look at the work and experience of teachers.

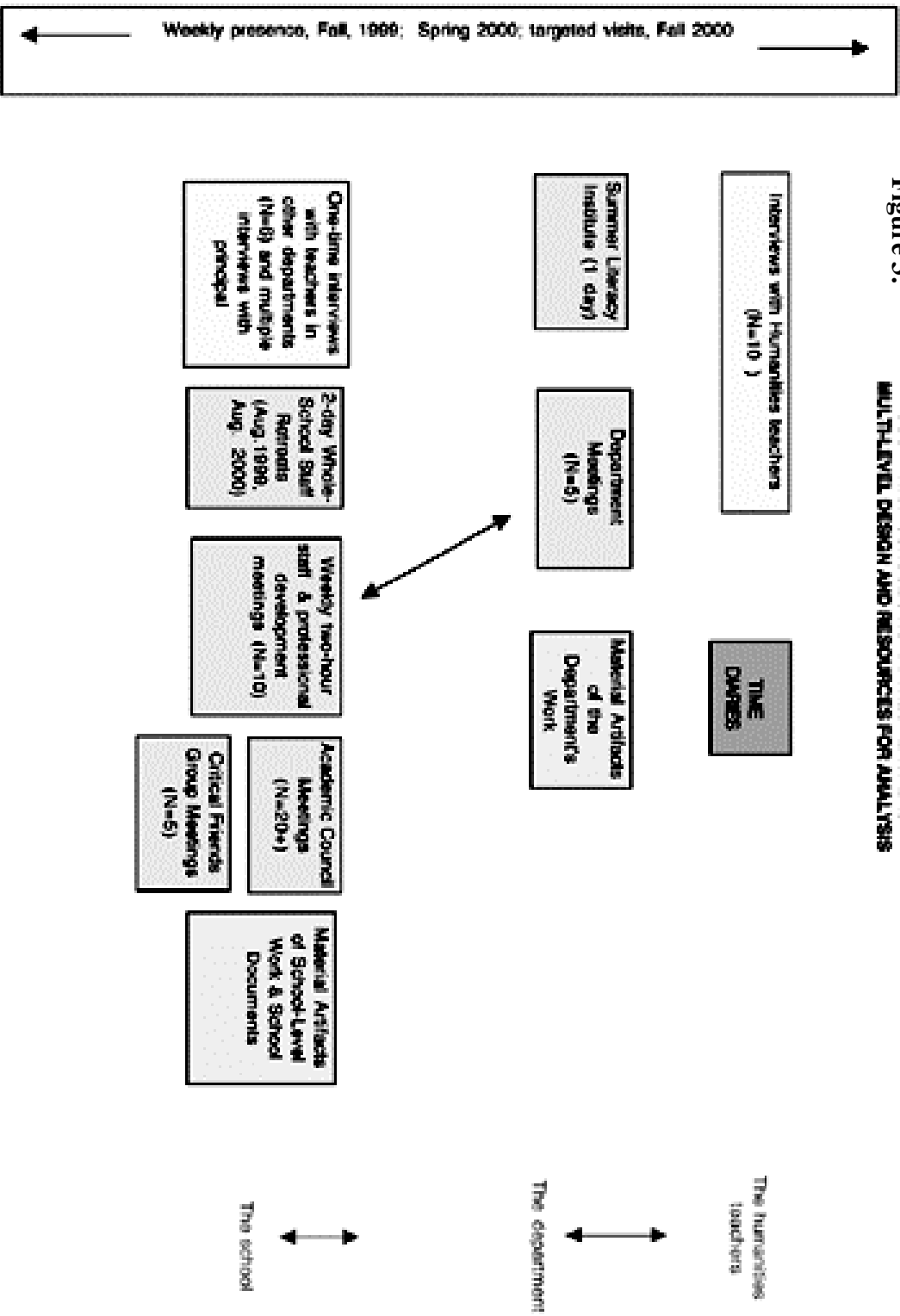
For the purpose of this analysis, I rely principally on the interviews, observations and time diaries<sup>5</sup> of twelve East High School English teachers and fourteen South High School Humanities teachers. In-depth interviews with open ended questions regarding professional commitments, role conceptions and priorities were conducted with every teacher. Altogether, the data set provides thirty-two interviews with teachers of English or humanities conducted over an eighteen-month period. This represents 100 percent of the full time English teachers at East and 85 percent of the full time humanities teachers at South.<sup>6</sup> All teachers were observed in multiple work contexts. These data were used to make determinations relied upon in this analysis including the teacher leadership charts and patterns of teacher seniority and turnover. Figures 2 and 3 represent the multiple levels and types of data collected at each school.



EAST HIGH SCHOOL'S ENGLISH TEACHERS  
MULTI-LEVEL DESIGN & RESOURCES FOR ANALYSIS

Figure 2:





## **The Schools and Teachers**

East's English teachers and South's humanities<sup>7</sup> teachers share a commitment to the expanded role conception – particularly as it pertains to leadership and collaboration. At East, the English teachers work in grade level teams to develop and coordinate curricula keyed to department assessments. As a department, they have embraced a concept of teachers' role that transcends the boundaries of the classroom as they concern themselves with the language and literacy of all students across the curriculum. They are committed to collective work, ambitious conceptions of classroom teaching, inquiry into their own practice, accountability, teacher leadership, and department concerns. East English teachers hold themselves accountable for the learning of all students, not just the students they see daily. This broadly focused accountability motivates much of their collaborative and leadership work.

Similarly, South's humanities teachers expect to be school leaders as well as humanities teachers. Like the East English teachers, the South teachers work in grade level teams to collaboratively develop curricula and create assessment rubrics. They participate in consensus-decision making as a whole staff and serve on a variety of leadership committees whose responsibilities range from developing school-wide assessment systems to budgeting and scheduling. South's Humanities teachers are broadly involved in the work of the school as leaders and decision-makers.

Despite the similarities between the teachers' commitment to and involvement with the work of the expanded teacher, the lived experiences of the teachers vary greatly by school. Teachers at South experience significant organizational support for the expanded role while teachers at East receive little to no support. In particular, teachers at the two schools receive vastly different arrangements of time and compensation for their leadership and collaborative work.

As shown in Table 1, South teachers always receive some compensation for their leadership work. They almost always receive financial compensation. In the absence of financial compensation they receive adjustments to their workload. As a rule, South High School pays teachers for any work undertaken outside of the regularly scheduled workday. On-going leadership roles, like department heads, school governance team member and special project

coordinators receive a stipend. Teachers who opt to participate in school-based research or curriculum development groups (teacher work groups) receive hourly pay for any work that extends beyond the normal work day and year. The school has minimized the cost of this work by providing time for collaborative work. Once a week the students are released early for community service work and the teachers get time, during their regular working day, for their collaborations.

**Table 1: Organizational Support for Leadership Roles by School**

| <i>Role</i>                | South High<br>Money | Time                    | East High<br>Money | Time |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------|
| <b>Department Head</b>     | \$1,632             | None                    | \$1,800            | None |
| <b>Governance Team</b>     | \$2,200             | None                    | None               | None |
| <b>Teacher work Groups</b> | \$20 an hour        | Wednesdays <sup>8</sup> | None               | None |

In comparison, East High’s English teachers receive very little support for their leadership and collaborative work (see Table 1). Few leadership roles are compensated financially and work load reduction is even rarer. Teachers who work on collaborative projects, like curriculum groups, do so on their own time – typically after school and summers – and without any form of financial compensation. The assumption of an on-going leadership role like the department head is compensated with a stipend but the workload far exceeds that of South’s department heads. While the East English department head does earn two hundred dollars more than the South department head, the East English department head has a significantly heavier workload. At South and at East, department heads are responsible for coordinating department meetings, overseeing the budget and facilitating the flow of information between the department and the academic council. In addition, East’s English department head is also responsible for budgeting and facilitating department meetings and must serve on the school’s governance council.<sup>9</sup> A South teacher who serves as both a department contact and governance council member makes \$3,832 – that is more than twice the stipend of the East English department head.

East teachers do not receive any workload adjustments when they assume a leadership role. East has made no accommodation comparable to South's weekly teacher work afternoon.

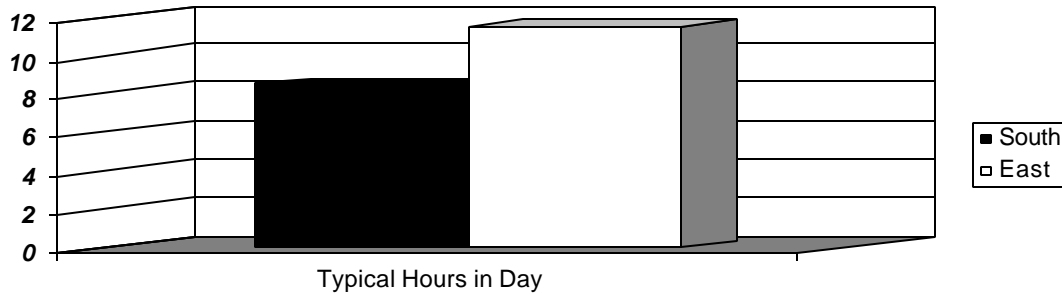
In their symbolic expressions of teacher work expectations, South and East High represent very different conceptions of teacher role. East's lack of material supports for the expanded role, in the form of time and compensation, signals a more narrow and traditional conception of the teacher role. South's support signals its recognition that teachers' roles have expanded and efforts must be made to ensure teachers are compensated for the new leadership and collaborative responsibilities they have undertaken. A mismatch between teachers' role conception and an organization's role conception, as manifested in its material supports, creates incongruous conditions that can have significant consequences for teachers' work.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Expanded Roles and Overwork***

Teachers at both schools share a commitment to the expanded teaching role, but they do not share an experience of the expanded teaching role. South teachers, whose work is supported by organizational policies, practices and structures, are able to undertake the leadership work without adding significantly to their work day. For the East teachers, who receive little support for this work, sustaining the expanded role requires uncompensated and longer work hours.

East's lack of support for the expanded role has dramatic and devastating consequences for its English teachers. Lacking time during the work day for the collaborative leadership work they embrace, the East English teachers accommodate it by extending their work day. East's teachers typically work 11.5 hours a day. In comparison South's teachers typically work just 8.5 hours a day<sup>11</sup> (see Figure 4). Most of those three extra daily hours are taken up by teacher meetings. An analysis of just one English teacher's time use reveals at least thirteen after-school committee meetings monthly.<sup>12</sup> If we assume twenty-three school days a month, then fifty-six percent of those days include an after school meeting and that does not account for the meeting preparation work.

**Figure 4: Typical Daily Work Hours by School**



Work hour differentials are not the only differences between teachers at East and South High Schools. Teacher turnover for East English teachers is much higher and the average seniority level much lower than for South humanities teachers. Between September 1998 and June 2001, East High School lost half (six of the twelve) of its English teachers. During this same time, less than fifteen percent (two of fourteen) of South’s humanities teachers exited the school. East’s high turnover negatively effected the seniority of its teaching staff. Few English teachers made it past the five year mark. In the Spring of 2000, East’s average seniority was only 3.25 years in teaching while South’s average seniority was 9.8 years in teaching.<sup>13</sup> All but two of East’s English teachers had less than five years teaching experience while only two of South’s teachers had less than five years of teaching experience. Twelve of South’s teachers had taught for more than five years compared to only two at East.

This analysis is not intended to draw a causal relationship between the long work hours at East and its high turnover and low seniority levels. Many factors unexamined here may contribute to these conditions. However, the differences between East and South’s work times and organizational supports, coupled with the turnover and seniority patterns, do suggest a plausible relationship.

**Table 2: Teacher seniority, experience and turnover by School**

|  | South     | East       |
|--|-----------|------------|
| <b>Teachers w/ &gt;5 yrs experience</b>              | 12 of 14  | 2 of 12    |
| <b>Teachers' average seniority</b>                   | 9.8 years | 3.25 years |
| <b>Teacher Turnover<br/>(Sept. 1998 - June 2001)</b> | 15%       | 50%        |

Additionally, the pattern of overwork at East High School is negatively affecting both teachers' work and home lives. Seven of the twelve East English teachers explicitly reference, in interviews, the strain that overwork is putting on their lives.<sup>14</sup> Six of the seven feel that, despite their long work hours, they are not able to live up to their work ideal. All seven of them report the long hours they work makes their home lives less satisfying. They complain of strained relationships with partners, lost creative pursuits, and lack of sleep. They are torn between living up to their work conceptions and having a life outside of school – and yet feeling dissatisfied with both.

A vivid example of these tensions lies in Karen Olsen's struggle to care emotionally and economically for her two young children, preserve her marriage and sustain her expanded work orientation and her commitment to teaching.<sup>15</sup> In her own words, she is the "queen of limited time." In her first three years at East, she addressed the time squeeze by putting work before family. Her maternity leave was very brief<sup>16</sup> and she always worked nights, weekends, and summers. In her fourth year of teaching, she shifted her use of time by narrowing her conception of her work role and intentionally spending more time with her children. She cut out all activities that were not directly connected to care of her children or her students – unless they came with additional compensation.

Time and money now drive many of Karen's decisions. Her middle class teacher's salary, even coupled with her husband's contribution from his working class job, is insufficient to sustain her family in the expensive San Francisco Bay Area:

*You know, it's kind of an embarrassing thing, and .... Whatever. But it is very much tied to who I am as a teacher. But umm...you know? I can't afford to even stay married. We're nine thousand a year below poverty. We're waiting for our Section-8 house, but it hasn't come in yet. And I'm going to have to get a roommate really soon. My mom pays for my children's preschool and last year, my expenses were \$32,000 more than what I brought in.<sup>17</sup> And I noticed cause I just did this financial aid form a couple of days ago, and I was shocked. I know my mom's been helping a lot, I know that we have to scrounge money here and there, I know that I have to do without all the time, and that my credit cards are in enormous debt that I'll never get out of. And so...I'm carrying all this burden, for what? And that's just really hard. And really demoralizing. To go to school, and you know? I have my room open at lunch, and the kids all make fun of me for having oatmeal all the time. 'All you ever eat is oatmeal. Gross.' I wanna say, you know what? It's because I decide to teach you kids and so...I'm too poor to afford a real lunch like you guys, you know? (Int. 1/29/01 lines 925-993).*

This financial and time crush caused Karen to narrow her expectations of herself as a teacher in an effort to sustain herself as a teacher and her family's well being. While in previous years she mentored student teachers, served as a grade captain, coordinated the student creative writing magazine<sup>18</sup> etc. – she now limits her professional activities to only those that either directly concern her classes (i.e.: curriculum development and grading) or increases her income. In her fourth year she started hosting Saturday school – an in-house detention program.<sup>19</sup> She still believes in the importance of teachers involving themselves in the leadership of the school and inquiring into practice – but she can't afford the time. She used to give up a lot of family time to sustain her professional identity but she is consciously changing that. She says, “now I am really going to divide my time. Instead of before when it was like work first and then my family. And now I am saying I am really going to spend half of my kids' day at school and the other half with them” (Int. 1/29/01 lines 1943-45). She is achieving this balance by teaching only two-thirds time. This may improve her family time but it will also increase her financial stress and has definite implications for her teaching identity.<sup>20</sup>

There is growing evidence that the East teachers are not the only ones overworking. Many teachers are working significantly longer hours than they are paid for and report that their work is not doable within the regularly scheduled work day (Drago, Caplan, Costanza, Brubaker, Cloud, Harris, Kashian and Riggs, 2001; Pocock, van Wanrooy, Strazzari and Bridge, 2001).



Given the possible costs to the profession that result from teacher stress and attrition, it is important that the causes of overwork are identified.

### **Explanations for Teacher Overwork**

There are two main overwork theories in the work/family literature. The first is Juliet Schor's economic argument that overwork is motivated by the desire for increased income. Employers' financial incentives lure employees into ever increasing cycles of overwork and consumption (Schor 1991, 1999). The second is Arlie Hochschild's argument that people increasingly prefer work to home. This preference is born of both employers' efforts to make work more appealing, employees feelings of comfort and community at work and the sense many people have that success and rewards at work are more easily earned and discerned than at home. The work of home life, particularly the relationship and child-rearing aspects, are often fraught with ambiguity. This argument, that work has become home and home has become work, suggests people overwork because work rewards and satisfactions outstrip those of family life (Hochschild, 1997).

Neither of these theories fully explain teacher overwork. Theories based in economic incentives prove least persuasive in this case. Much of the extra work undertaken by teachers is uncompensated. There is little to no financial gain for teachers who overwork. As teachers' incomes are generally fixed regardless of hours worked and salaries are generally only increased by seniority, it seems unlikely that many teachers are motivated to overwork by the promise of increased income.

Theories that give prominence to psychological and social rewards of work have more explanatory power. Hochschild's work thus goes further in explaining teachers' overwork.<sup>21</sup> There is some indication that a sense of community and a desire to belong at work can partially explain the East teachers' overwork. Traditionally teachers work in isolation from other adults but the work of the expanded role – leadership and collaboration – bring teachers into greater contact with other adults during the work day. Teachers experience this adult work contact positively and will go some length to sustain it – even under conditions that do not support it (Bartlett, 2001). These findings are consistent with Hochschild's theories of overwork. Teachers,

like other workers, want to live up to their colleagues expectations, to experience a sense of belonging and to sustain a positive work identity.

However, Hochschild's work does not fully account for the overwork observed among the case study teachers. Several elements limit the explanatory value of this theory for teaching. First, schools are generally more primitive workplaces than those of the private sector employing individuals of comparable educational attainment. High school teachers commonly work in an emotionally and interpersonally intense environment (seeing 150 to 180 adolescents in their classes every day), without adequate work space, basic supplies, telephone access or even bathroom breaks (Little, 2001). One of the common appeals of work to the workers studied by Hochschild is the social exchange with other adults, and this, too, is in short supply for high school teachers, who spend most of the work day in the company of adolescents. Certainly the "new company town" (Useem, 2000) with its many workplace amenities—on-site child care, exercise facilities, catered meals, courier services—remains far outside the workplace experience of teachers. In effect, teachers trade their long hours neither for high incomes nor for added workplace comforts and services. (Ironically, in the few instances that childcare is offered on high school campuses, it is generally only available to the students' children.)

Additionally, teaching work is endowed with the same ambiguity of goals and rewards as the home, leaving teachers frequently unsure of their relative success (Lortie, 1975). Finally, teachers frequently take work home with them. This work invasion into the home runs counter to the idea that teachers might overwork to avoid home (Drago et al, 2001). Further, there is some evidence that family responsibilities (like caring for a child) make it more difficult to sustain the work hours and identity of the expanded work role (Bartlett, 2001; Lohman and Woolf, 2001).

This paper offers a further, but partial, explanation by attributing overwork to teachers' efforts to sustain a particular conception of teaching obligations in the absence of sufficient organizational supports. Without support for leadership work, especially time during the school day to accomplish it, teachers must undertake those aspects of their work outside of the regular school day. Certain puzzles remain. This argument does not yet account for why teachers persevere with the expanded role in the absence of organizational supports. Why don't the East English teachers simply abandon the expanded role conception? Many of them, as the turnover

and seniority patterns and Karen's story suggest, do abandon it - but generally only after a sustained period of striving to sustain it (see also Little, 1996). Because the nature and extent of teachers' overwork emerged only in the process of data analysis, the interview data offer incomplete evidence to account for teachers' persistence. However, the topic did come up spontaneously in several of the interviews. Relying on these instances, I propose three related explanations for that sustained striving: 1) teachers' equation of the expanded role with good teaching practice; 2) the moral imperative of teaching; and 3) the desire to live up to the expectations held by themselves and their colleagues.

The East English teachers are unable to abandon the expanded role conception easily because it has become a standard of good teaching they have internalized. Abandoning the expanded role would require them to either accept a lower professional standard of themselves or redefine what it means to be a good teacher.<sup>22</sup> Patrick, the English department head, believes he and others are better teachers when they collaborate and coordinate their practice. Collaboration gets them closer to producing "more of the right thing" than if he was to do it on his own:

*The reason I think it's worthwhile in this context is that, if we were not collaborating and trying to stay close to each other so that we were working together on lessons . . . I think that there's a deepening of the curriculum when people are forced to talk about it or need to talk about it, or want to talk about it with each other. I think that there's evidence of that in my own teaching. . . we believe that collaboration eventually will produce the right thing, and more of the right thing than if I were to do it on my own. We believe that some of the things we're going to try to lace this collaboration around is the right thing to teach our kids. Therefore, we have got to do this thing, or nobody else will, kind of feeling. It's almost like a bunch of martyrs on some sticks that are nailed up around the building. 10/20/99, (lines 818-850)*

Implicit in Patrick's statement is the moral imperative for teachers to serve students well regardless of personal cost. It is important to do this work of good teaching – even if it martyrs them – because it is for students. Others in the department share Patrick's notion of good teaching. They set a very high professional standard and feel individually inadequate if they are unable to meet the expectations. Morag, a third year English teacher, ninth grade curriculum coordinator and new teacher mentor whose work day averages 11 hours, says,

*I just mean, you know, the day to day reality of teaching and the grading and the amount of work and trying to strike a balance and feeling like I'm constantly not doing the kind of job that I know I could do if other factors were available . . . So you know I guess if it doesn't continue to improve, the difference between what I think I can do and what I am doing, if that gap doesn't continue to get smaller to a point where I can say, okay, I can accept this gap, then I probably would consider pursuing the field of education in another way. (Int. 2/9/99, lines 1401-1409).*

When asked whether the expectations might be too high and the support for the work too low, she first agrees but then upon reflection adds,

*But there are teachers who can do things like that - like Patrick. So it's hard to bring that (the goals and expectations) down. I think sometimes it comes down for me - but then I look at other teachers and I say, my gosh, they can coach soccer, and they can work out every day, and they can still have their grades every week and they have children. . . (Int. 2/9/99, lines 1446-1451).*

Margaret, in her third teaching year, also equates the expanded teaching role with good teaching practice and perceives it as increasing the quality of education offered to students. She offers both of these reasons as explanations for the extra leadership work she has assumed:

*. . . mainly because there's a need for it, I think. And everybody, it seems to me like ...everyone has a lot more on their plate than they can handle at once, so, and yet there's still a really great need, um, and I think that maybe in the third year what got me interested in it (leadership roles) was just seeing that I could impact students more, perhaps even more effectively if there was more school cohesion, and there were more teachers talking about, if there are just more, you know, structural changes versus classroom individual, and the choose this book over another book. I think the quality of the education can increase. (4/11/00 Lines 709 -716)*

The opportunity to improve the quality of education for students has motivated her to involve herself broadly in the work of the school but she admits another reason she takes this work on is collegial expectation:

*I do feel like it's expected. . . Um, I feel like where, I guess the school and the department, and...I mean I think that by, through watching, like people's example, through example of other teachers. . . It feels like, that other people do things and you're expected to do things too. (4/11/00 Lines 697-702)*

Lynne, in her fourth year as an East English teacher, feels the same pressure to live up to her colleagues' expectations for collaborative curriculum development and classroom

coordination. She acknowledges the work is productive and valuable but also difficult and time-consuming as provisions for that work are not made in their work schedule.

*So there's this expectation that we're doing all this work together and some people do a very good job of that. I probably do a less good job of that. . . I think that a lot of the work we've done at the tenth grade level as a team has been incredibly productive and valuable and I really respect my colleagues and find that the work that they've contributed to be really helpful, but it means that you have to find time to work as a team. And that's time that is not built in to our schedule, and so I just always feel that to be a conflict.(Int. 2/7/2000, lines421-439)*

As Lynne puts it, teachers at East attempting the work of the expanded role get “No room. No pay. No time.”

### **Conclusion**

The cases presented here suggest reformers have succeeded in expanding teacher role in some schools and among some teachers. However, where the adoption of the role and supports for it are uneven, teachers attempting to sustain it are vulnerable to overwork and its related stress. In examining these cases of teacher work, I have highlighted an area of overwork previously unexplained by theoretical frames. Additionally, this work illuminates the organization's ability to mediate overwork with policies and practices integral to its structure, rather than relying solely on specialized work-family friendly policies.

Mainstream theories of overwork are insufficient to explain these cases. Teachers overwork despite lack of financial incentives and in the absence of compelling work environments and supports. Teachers attempt to sustain the expanded role, even in the absence of organizational supports, in response to understandings and commitments to internal notions of good teaching, collegial and personal expectations, and the moral imperative of teaching to provide the best possible educational opportunities for students.

There are significant features that distinguish teachers from the other occupations previously considered in the theoretical frames of overwork. Teachers do not generally receive additional pay or promotion for extra work. Longer work hours do not result in higher pay. This suggests something else is motivating them to work the longer hours. Teaching is human service/care work. Many who enter it are motivated by intrinsic rewards (Lortie, 1975). Teachers

who rely on intrinsic sources of motivations – like a personal sense of satisfaction based on serving students well or living up to notions of good teaching – may not be able to reconcile themselves to doing less. Letting work slide may be perceived as letting people slide – thereby sacrificing an essential source of reward.

The organizational structure of a school can support or constrain teachers' ability to fulfill their conceptions of good teaching within the regular work day. A good fit between teachers' work expectations and the material supports of the organization, enables teachers to complete their work without overworking, to minimize stress and to help sustain work commitment. South High supports the work of the expanded role with time allotted for collaborative and leadership work. In the absence of time, South High compensates its teachers financially for this work. By supporting the expanded role, South High makes it possible for teachers to fulfill the expectations of that role without overworking. At South High, the organization and the teachers appear to share the expanded conception of teacher role.

The case of East High suggests the teaching profession will pay the price of uneven role expansion with teacher overwork, stress, and increased teacher attrition rates. This exploratory analysis highlights the importance of further research into the relationship between role expansion, teacher overwork and teacher attrition. Such research will contribute to practical understandings of teacher retention as well as contribute the unique perspective of human service workers to overwork theory.

## Notes

1. By “overwork” I mean working beyond the contracted day, week and year. Teachers’ contracts specify their working time, when they work beyond this time without pay then they are overworking
2. The contract details cited here are drawn from the union contract of East High teachers. East high is one of the focal schools examined in this paper.
3. Block schedules of four ninety minute periods a day have replaced the fifty minute class period in many high schools. Both of the schools examined in this article use block schedules.
4. This literature is large, encompassing historical, sociological and social-psychological research. For example, see Jackson, 1968; Sizer, 1984; Warren, 1984.
5. The Time Diaries were adapted from those developed by Robert Drago et al (1999) for their study of *What Gives? A Time Diary Study of Teachers and Caring Time*.
6. The South number reflects 14 full time equivalent teaching positions but 13 assigned teachers. These are the 13 teachers who taught at the school full-time for the entire 1999-2000 school year. The remaining teacher resigned during the school year due to illness and was replaced by a long-term substitute who was not included in the study.
7. South does not have an English department. English, history, social studies and some art are taught by humanities teachers in interdisciplinary classes.
8. Teachers do not receive both time and money. If the work is done during the Wednesday collaborative time slot then it is unpaid. If it is done outside of the regular school day then it is paid.
9. East High has a Curriculum Council while South High has an Academic Council. These two groups are equivalent in that they represent the highest teacher leadership group in the school. In other ways they are quite different. South’s Academic Council has authority over budgeting, personnel and sets and directs school policy. Members are elected and serve a two year term. East’s Curriculum Council has a much smaller circle of influence serving primarily as an advisory council to the principal and reviewing course syllabi. Membership is appointed by the principal.
10. Elsewhere I have written more fully on the topic of role congruence and teacher commitment (Bartlett, 2001).
11. As determined from the time diaries completed by twelve East Teachers and fourteen South teachers. Each teacher kept the time and task diary for three days. The ‘typical work time’ was

determined by averaging only those work days designated by respondents as typical of their work time.

12. Meetings included three curriculum development groups, grade level study groups, school leadership team, curriculum council, and department meetings.

13. East's aggregate based on the average of its twelve teachers' teaching experience while South is based on the average years in teaching of twelve of its fourteen teachers. Total years in teaching was not available on the other two so they were not included. However, each of them had been at South for more than five years.

14. Of the remaining five English teachers, two appear to hold more traditional conceptions of the teaching role. Neither of them have taken on leadership roles and both question the importance of collaborative work. A third teacher is new to the school and teaching and receives a great deal of support from the others.

15. Karen is the only one of the twelve teachers who had primary care responsibilities for children.

16. Teachers do not get paid maternity leave, They are allowed to go on state disability and to receive the difference between their pay and the rate paid for their substitute

17. Karen makes \$35,000 dollars a year. Her monthly take home pay is \$2,200. Her rent is \$1,350 a month.

18. All uncompensated – with either time or money – activities at the school.

19. An add on that the school recognizes with financial compensation. Students sit silently in the room. Karen uses the time to grade papers. She says, "I am doing Saturday schools and you get paid for those. So that's extra pay. I can do that in the morning and get some work done at school and I can do it in my own classroom."

20. Karen's goal was to increase family time but she uses at least 2 afternoons a week for school work. She is still doing unpaid work – but now she is earning even less than before.

21. In addition, Hochschild's work opened up a substantially new way of thinking about overwork. She framed the problem in terms that encompass both the work and family sphere – a frame that permits a more complex look at the causes and consequences of overwork.

22. As I have written elsewhere (Bartlett, 2001) some teachers do redefine their definitions of good teaching but generally only after efforts to sustain the expanded role conception despite the lack of organizational support.



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