Emotional aspects of teacher collegiality: A narrative approach

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Abstract: This paper studies emotions as an important aspect of teacher collegiality. It aims to investigate emotionally charged aspects of teacher collegiality in teachers' stories about colleagues in order to problematize a polarized understanding within this field of research into collegiality as either good or bad. The positioning of teachers in the stories draws on culturally available narratives of teacher's responsibility to: foster and care for students and to engage in the subject they teach. Findings argue for an understanding of teacher collegiality as processes of conflict and consensus that impact on teachers' professional work and development.
Dear Editors,

Thank you for your comments and suggestions. We have followed the five comments from the reviewers. We have also made some minor changes concerning the references in the text and in the reference list so that the article now hopefully is consistent with APA (6th).

Yours sincerely
The Authors
Dear Reviewers,

Thank you for your comments and constructive feedback on this paper. We have followed your suggestions. We have also made some minor changes concerning the references in the text and in the reference list so that the article now hopefully is consistent with APA (6th).

Yours sincerely
The Authors
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Dear Editors, I hope you will be interested in publishing our manuscript. The manuscript is not currently being considered for publication by any other journal.

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Best regards

Dr. Håkan Löfgren
Highlights

The findings in this study challenge research promoting an understanding of collegiality as good or bad for teacher professional work and development.

Conceptions of collegiality in school emerge as emotionally charged in teachers’ stories about social interaction with colleagues.

Different teachers refer to different culturally available narratives on teachers’ work when they position themselves vis-à-vis their colleagues.
Emotional aspects of teacher collegiality – a narrative approach

Abstract

This paper studies emotions as an important aspect of teacher collegiality. It aims to investigate emotionally charged aspects of teacher collegiality in teachers’ stories about colleagues in order to problematize a polarized understanding within this field of research into collegiality as either good or bad. The positioning of teachers in the stories draws on culturally available narratives of teacher’s responsibility to: foster and care for students and to engage in the subject they teach. Findings argue for an understanding of teacher collegiality as processes of conflict and consensus that impact on teachers’ professional work and development.

Keywords: Collegiality; Emotion; Teacher

1. Introduction

The fact that teachers meet and talk to each other has been considered an antidote to the teacher isolation described by Lortie (1975) and as something that might strengthen their professional learning (Mawhinney, 2010) and professional development (Hofman, & Dijkstra, 2010). A central issue for successful collaborative work is that teachers trust one another and develop quality collegial relations (Graves, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2006; Nias, 1998). In this paper, we therefore stress emotions as an important aspect of teacher collegiality and teachers’ work. By bridging research on teacher collegiality and teachers’ emotions, and by using a narrative analysis, we argue for a more complex understanding of collegiality that considers the multiple emotions and meanings involved when teachers position themselves in relation to their colleagues in narratives of past events. Earlier research has identified different forms of collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994; Harris & Anthony, 2001; Little, 1990) and later research has focused on how different forms of collegiality take shape in local school contexts (Jurasaitė–Harbison & Rex, 2010; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). This research has been fruitful in investigating the links between different forms of teacher collegiality or school cultures and teachers’ collaborative work. However, we argue that this research also tends to polarize the discussion about collegiality as either normatively good or bad. We adhere to research that argues for the need to problematize and nuance the view of collegiality by emphasizing both pros and cons when describing how collegial communities at a school become important for the work of teachers (Hargreaves, 1994). Such analysis “demands a certain level of sophistication” (Kelchtermans, 2006, p. 234) and should focus on the emotions of the teachers involved (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000; Craig, 2013; Hargreaves, 2002).

It is well known that relations in school are complex and are influenced by the emotions involved among different actors in school (Cowie, 2011; Uitto, Jokikokko, & Estola, 2015). Clement and Vandenberghe (2000) have demonstrated that feelings of mutual trust and warm relations on a personal basis between teachers in school are essential for the development of “professionally challenging relationships, leaving scope for teachers individuality” (p. 98), but
also that such feelings sometimes install relations of dependence and paternalism. In the same vein, Hargreaves (2001, 2002) has stressed that, for example, feelings of appreciation as well as feelings of betrayal are at stake when teachers shape their relations with colleagues.

In line with Hargreaves (1994, 2002), Clement and Vandenberghe (2000) and Kelchtermans (2006), we argue that it is time to take another step on the road towards a less polarized, and more complex and situated understanding of teacher collegiality. We wish to question assumptions about teachers’ professional work as characterized by autonomy or collaboration, and problematize views of collegiality as something unambiguously ‘good’ or ‘bad’, where teachers either work smoothly together or get into micro-political conflicts that conserve their working methods. In order to question these polarizations, we adopt a narrative perspective that embraces the richness of different stories on teacher collegiality in school. Through this paper, we wish to contribute to this field of research with one example of how emotional aspects of teacher collegiality emerge and take different shapes in teachers’ storied experiences of collegial relations at one Swedish compulsory school.

The study presented in this paper is based on 15 life-history interviews (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) with 8 teachers during the years 2007 – 2009 (Author, 2012). The teachers had been working at the same upper level compulsory school in a mid-sized Swedish town. The school opened in 1965 and closed down in 2007. In this paper, we especially focus on three teachers’ stories about working together with a specific group of colleagues at the school. The stories are viewed as socially situated actions (Mishler, 1999), and through a positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997) we target emotions emerging in the positioning of both story characters and storyteller. We take our point of departure from a definition of the concept of collegiality as referring to ideas about reciprocity, cohesion and mechanisms for internal control among colleagues with similar competences (Svensson, 2010). While collaboration refers to teachers’ cooperative actions, collegiality is a concept with normative and relational dimensions. In this paper, our main focus is on collegiality, although we refer to research in which the terms collaboration and collegiality are used interchangeably. More specifically, collegiality is here referred to as “the quality of the relationships among staff members in a school” (Kelchtermans, 2006, p. 221).

Departing from this definition of teacher collegiality, we ask:

What aspects of teacher collegiality emerge as emotionally charged in teachers’ stories about social interaction with colleagues, and how can these emotional aspects of collegiality contribute to a less polarized understanding of teacher collegiality?

In what follows, we present an overview of research on teacher collegiality and emotions in which we point out and critique what we see as a polarization between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ collegiality within this field of research. Subsequently, the narrative approach is presented, followed by a description of the data and method of analysis. The results of the positioning analysis are then presented and discussed in the concluding sections of the paper.
2. Research on teacher collegiality and emotions
We have outlined a polarization related to the pros and cons of different forms of teacher collegiality. We have also found that collegiality, when described in relation to certain school contexts, tends to be described in the singular as if the teachers in a school agreed on what it meant. In what follows, we describe the polarization and singularity of meaning characterizing research on teacher collegiality. We end this section with a discussion of the need to study emotions as an aspect of collegiality.

2.1 Pros and cons of different forms of teacher collegiality
After the influential work of Lortie (1975), there was a strong emphasis on the positive effects of teacher collaboration. Teachers working alone was seen as a problem for the profession and collaboration as a means of professionalization (Hargreaves, 2006). It was, for example, suggested that shared decision-making and consultation among teachers promotes good results in schools, and that collaborative work could “take teacher development beyond personal, idiosyncratic reflection, or dependence on outside experts” (Hargreaves, 1994 p. 186).

Hargreaves (1994) describes two major forms of collegial teacher cultures. In the “collaborative cultures” (p. 192), the relations between teachers are spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, pervasive over time and space and unpredictable, while in conditions of “contrived collegiality” (p. 195) relations are administratively regulated, compulsory, implementation-oriented, fixed in time and space and predictable. Little (1990) has suggested another distinction between four forms of collegial relations and positions them on a scale from independence to interdependence between teachers in school. These forms – e.g. storytelling and scanning for ideas, aid and assistance, sharing and finally joint work – describe teachers’ work on a continuum from individual to collective conceptions of professional autonomy. Harris and Anthony (2001) have suggested two forms of collegial relations. Emotionally supportive collegiality is characterized by open communication, listening to ideas and a respect for each other’s work, and is described as an insufficient condition for teacher development. The other form of collegiality, collegial interaction, which really encourages teacher development, is characterized by personal, intensive relations between colleagues who share values, goals and visions about teaching. These kinds of descriptions of forms of collegiality have proven useful when investigating collegiality as an aspect of teachers’ work. However, they also tend to encourage research that describes collegiality as one-sidedly and normatively good or bad.

In a literature review on teacher collegiality, Shah (2012b) claims that collegiality plays a “vital role in augmenting teacher professional growth and development, job satisfaction, organizational and professional commitment as well as school quality and student performance” (p. 1242). Several studies support claims that collegiality, for example, promotes teachers’ professional development (Park, Oliver, Johnson, Graham, & Oppong, 2007), professional growth (Harris & Anthony, 2001) and commitment, prevents teacher attrition (Heider, 2005), and has a positive impact on students’ results (Shah, 2012b).
This celebration of teacher collegiality among researchers in the field has been met with criticism from studies that highlight the cons of collegiality or the vagueness of the term (Ben Sasson, & Somech, 2015; Kelchtermans, 2006). An example of studies that take a more critical stance as regards teacher collegiality is Ben Sasson and Somech (2015), which asserts that expressions of hostility towards colleagues involving obstructionist behaviour and aggression are sometimes involved in teachers’ work in teams. Leonard and Leonard (2003) found that many teachers “continue to depict severe limitations in the capacity to work meaningfully with colleagues in ways that allow them to address the common goal of enhanced student achievement” (p. 7). Other studies indicate that friendship between teachers is not the norm (Hargreaves, 2001; Malm, 2009), and that norms of non-interference and privacy are common (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, 2009). It has also been suggested that demands on collaboration “may encourage calculated exchanges rather than foster emotional links” (Jo, 2014, p. 127). Little (1990) described the “amorphous” (p. 509) character of the term collegiality as including all kinds of interaction between teachers. Hargreaves (1994) argued that there is no true collegiality, “[t]here are only different forms of collaboration and collegiality that have different consequences and serve different purposes” (p. 189). Also, Clement and Vandenberghe (2000) question “the longing for a completely collegial school” (p. 98), and underpin the idea that some planning and teaching is better done alone and that some teachers function best when working autonomously. In a review article about teacher collaboration and collegiality, Kelchtermans (2006) concludes that “[s]implistic claims about the benefits of collaboration are as little wanted as negative judgments about teacher autonomy” (p. 234). He describes teacher collegiality as, on the one hand, a process of sense-making related to shared values and norms, where similarities are emphasized and consensus is important. On the other hand, from a micro-political perspective, collegiality has to do with competing interests and power-struggles related to different agendas. We underpin the need, suggested by Hargreaves (1994) and emphasized by Kelchtermans (2006), to focus on both conflicting interests/micropolitics and processes of consensus-making when researching teacher collegiality.

In line with this, we see a great potential in analysing collegiality as an aspect of teachers’ work, and question claims made in one-sided descriptions of the pros and cons of collegiality. Moreover, teachers’ personal experiences of social relations with colleagues are always laden with emotions that are important to consider if we want to understand different aspects of teacher collegiality. A consequence of this reasoning is that research needs to address the emotional tensions involved in teachers’ stories about their experiences of collegiality in their work. One way of doing this is to listen carefully to what teachers have to say about “professional relationships among team members based on personal feelings” (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000, p. 98).

2.2 Teacher collegiality and emotions in school contexts

Most studies of teacher collegiality use a qualitative approach. Several studies point out that collegiality is a complex phenomenon that needs to be understood as part of specific school contexts defined by tradition, leadership, students and policies (Jurasaite–Harbison & Rex, 2010; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004). A study by Craig (2013) shows that a polarized understanding of what characterizes ‘good’ or ‘bad’ forms of teacher collegiality falls apart in
the face of teachers’ experiences of everyday school practice. Therefore, we follow Craig and approach the question of teacher collegiality from the vantage point of storied work life experiences among teachers who have worked together at the same school. The ways in which teachers make sense of and ascribe emotions to these experiences can help us gain a deeper understanding of how collegiality can take different shapes and forms in one local school context.

Research that targets emotional aspects of teaching and learning has played a peripheral role for a long time (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009), but the interest in teachers and emotions is now increasing, according to a recent review article (Uitto, et al., 2015). Uitto et al. identify seven categories of research on teachers and emotions. One category — “teachers, emotions and relationships” (p. 3) — includes teachers’ collegial relations even though most articles concentrate on teacher–student relationships. They highlight that few studies of veteran teachers and emotions were conducted, and that studies on teachers’ relational networks were rarely reported. However, we have found a few studies about teacher collegiality and emotions. Hargreaves (2001) found personal support and social acceptance, appreciation and acknowledgement, cooperation, collaboration and conflict, and trust and betrayal as recurring themes in teachers’ accounts of emotionally significant aspects of their relations with colleagues. In the same vein, Clement and Vandenberghe (2000) argue that feelings of trust, consisting of, among other things, good communication and critical reflections among colleagues, is a main trait for developing collective expertise in school. Graves (2001) emphasizes “strong emotional connections with colleagues” (p. 13) when he lists collegiality as one of the main factors that encourage teachers to maintain energy and keep teaching innovative. Other studies focus on how collegial relations and emotions are affected by accountability policies (Mausethagen, 2013). Donaldson (2001) argues that it is important to acknowledge emotions in teacher relations when building up the capacity of a group of teachers to respond to changes. Jarzabkowski (2003) explores the relation between emotions and collegiality in rural Australian schools, and concludes that the isolated physical location of such schools stresses the need to offer social and emotional support to the teachers, especially the new ones. Nias (1998) shows that beginner teachers need emotional support in terms of encouragement, while collegial relations tend to be even more important to more experienced teachers. Löfström and Eisenschmidt (2009) studied beginner teacher experiences of having a mentor during their first years of teaching and found that the mentors were very important in helping them to become socialized into school communities through introduction, sharing of contextual knowledge and making places for them in the school communities. These studies have in common that they highlight teachers’ emotions in order to improve or shape a ‘good collegiality’.

A few studies also acknowledge that emotions not always improve teachers’ collegial work, but also sometimes make it more complicated. Cowie (2011) studied emotions expressed in relation to colleagues by teachers in a university. Results from the interviews showed that relations with colleagues were often described as a source of satisfaction as long as they did not entail differences regarding educational values in terms of student support and learning. Status differences and experiences of lack of support were sources of negative emotions such
as anger and disappointment. In a study of student teachers’ experiences of teacher education, Rots, Kelchtermans and Aelterman (2012) found that social and cultural working conditions in schools affected student teachers’ decisions on job entrance after graduation. Experiences of a lack of collegiality in schools such as, for example, gossip among teachers and reluctance among teachers to share materials and ideas, became a threat to their job motivation and provoked feelings of disappointment. Collegial relations among beginner teachers are also targeted by Author (2013) in a study on the shaping of teacher identities in the social context of student teacher peer groups. Author shows that students’ negotiated identifications with culturally available teacher identities were charged with emotions such as fear, embarrassment and anger. Finally, Hargreaves (2002) described betrayal as “the emotional enemy of improvement” (p. 405), and identified three themes. *Contractual betrayal* is characterized by a lack of engagement by colleagues who do not do what they are supposed to do. *Communication betrayal* is about colleagues who gossip, misunderstand and criticize a teacher in front of other colleagues as a way of acting out an involvement in developing the common good. Finally, *competence betrayal* is a combination of the other two forms and is about feelings of being “shamed and blamed” (p. 405) and getting one’s competence questioned in public. A conclusion to be drawn from this research is that emotions that take shape in collegial relations among teachers in school are a factor that can both strengthen and weaken the quality of teachers’ work.

Through this paper we wish to contribute to this field of research with one example of how emotional aspects of teacher collegiality emerge and take different shapes in teachers’ storied experiences of collegial relations at one Swedish compulsory school. We argue that it is important to acknowledge that different teachers working at the same school ascribe different meanings to their collegial relations. Few studies, except Craig (2013), direct their interest to individual teacher’s perspectives on collegial relations within the same school. Researchers often describe whole schools as dominated by one form of collegiality or another, and link that form of collegiality to the quality of teachers’ work. However, we wish to problematize these kinds of general descriptions and polarizations and address different micro-political interests among different teachers within the same school. To do this, we need to listen carefully to individuals’ stories about the collegial relations and analyse the feelings involved, which motivate a narrative approach.

3. A narrative approach to emotions in teacher collegiality

We take our point of departure in a theoretical perspective on narratives as social practice (Mishler, 1999). This narrative approach presents an understanding of emotional aspects of teacher collegiality through a focus on how teachers, in interview conversations, make narrative sense of the past work life experiences of collegial relations. Looking at stories of personal experiences as a social practice means that a story told in an interview is seen as co-constructed by interviewee and interviewer. This, in turn, makes the telling of the story as interesting to analyse as its content. An analytical focus on both the story content and on how the story is told (Mishler, 1995) can teach us about emotional aspects of teacher collegiality as the stories emerge through the sense-making practice of co-narrating the teachers’ past experiences.
An analysis that targets the ways in which teachers as story characters are located in space and time (Denzin, 1989) and are positioned in relation to each other and to the interview situation (Bamberg, 1997) can make visible emotional aspects of collegial relations. According to Davies and Harré (1990), positioning theory is concerned with the distribution of rights and duties among people engaged in different kinds of actions. It centres on the patterns of reason revealed in interaction, and in this way on the meaning people discern in the actions of themselves and others in relation to certain moral domains and discursive practices. Following Davies and Harré (1990), Bamberg (1997) has developed a method for studying positioning in storytelling that takes into consideration the narrated past events and the present evaluation of these past events through storytelling. The model makes possible the study of how people (here teachers) “produce” one another (and themselves) situationally as “social beings” through the telling of stories that take shape in relation to culturally available narratives which the speaker holds to be true outside the immediate storytelling context. How teachers position themselves vis-à-vis their colleagues is related to how they refer to various culturally available narratives on teachers’ work. This narrative approach to positioning enables an understanding of emotional aspects of teacher collegiality from the perspective of teachers’ storied experiences.

4. Data, methodological and ethical considerations
Empirically, this study is anchored in 15 life-history interviews (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) conducted individually by the first author with 8 teachers during the years 2007 – 2009. The teachers had been working together at the same upper level compulsory school in a Swedish mid-sized town, and the stories cover a 40-year period of school history. Most of the teachers were still active as teachers in the 2000s, and some of them started working at the school very early in their careers. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in detail, acknowledging, for example, the length of pauses, voice levels, citations of characters in the stories and the use of different voices (Bauman, 1986). The transcripts were coded regarding the content of the teachers’ stories about different relations in the school. In this initial analysis of the interview data, three major themes concerning collegial aspects of the teachers’ work at the school such as the teachers’ relations to the principal and to their students were found. The third theme concerned emotionally charged stories about one specific group of teachers who had been working at the school for a long time (Author, 2012). This theme is analysed in more detail in this paper due to the strong emotions the teachers expressed when telling these stories. For the analysis presented in this paper, we selected three stories that pictured relations between the teacher and the aforementioned group at the school in ways that involved different emotional aspects of teacher collegiality. This selection was guided by research emphasizing the plurality of collegiality (e.g., Hargreaves, 1994; Kelchtermans, 2006). Accordingly, our intention is to illustrate the diversity in the ways that collegial relations emerged through the data. The selection of the three stories from the interview transcripts was also guided by our interest in making visible the different emotional aspects of teacher collegiality in the teachers’ storied experiences of collegial relations.
4.1 Ethical considerations
The teachers interviewed in this study were informed that they could end their participation at any stage of the process, that the data would be used for research only, and that they would be given the opportunity to read the transcripts. Names of people and places have been altered in order to meet research ethical requirements of confidentiality.

4.2 Data analysis
In order to answer the first of our two research questions; *What aspects of teacher collegiality emerge as emotionally charged in teachers’ stories about social interaction with colleagues?*, we apply the three-level model for positioning analysis developed by Bamberg (1997, 2004). The three levels of analysis in the model target: 1. What is the story about, and how are the story characters positioned in relation to each other? At this first level, the analysis focuses on how the characters are positioned within the story world; the aim is to find out what characterises the individuals through linguistic means, as for example as agents in, or without, control. The second level of the analysis asks: 2. How do the interlocutors position themselves and each other in the interactive situation? The analytical interest is here directed at the social function of the story in the interview context. Stories can, for example, be told as a way to instruct and advise the audience or to make excuses and blame others for an incident. The third level targets what the “narrator holds to be true and relevant above and beyond the local conversational situation” (Bamberg, 1997, p. 337) by asking: 3. How do the interlocutors position themselves vis-à-vis cultural discourses and normative positions. The analysis thus targets the following questions;

1. What are the personal stories of collegial relations about, and how are the story characters (here teachers, pupils, etc.) positioned in relation to each other?
2. How do the teachers and interviewer position themselves and each other emotionally in relation to the storied experiences in the interview situation?
3. What culturally available narratives on teachers’ work emerge through the positioning of story characters and storytellers?

These three levels of positioning analysis distinguish the stories of collegial relations between teachers from the act of telling by separating the story characters positioned in the past story world from the positions that emerge in the immediate interview conversation. The third level makes relevant what culturally available norms and values the local positioning of story characters and storytellers are made in relation to. Finally, we discuss the results from the analysis in relation to the field of research on teacher collegiality in order to answer our second research question; how can these emotional aspects of collegiality contribute to a less polarized understanding of teacher collegiality?

5. Results and discussion
After a short presentation of the Lake School and the conditions under which it opened and closed down based on a previous study (Author, 2012), we present the positioning analysis of three stories dealing with events involving teachers who worked together at the Lake school.
5.1 The Lake School and an influential group of teachers

The Lake School opened in 1965 in a newly built residential area in a mid-sized town as part of a national welfare project in Sweden. This upper level compulsory school was planned to be a place where different social categories of people would meet and differences between social classes were to be reduced. The surrounding new homes consisted of flats for a blue-collar population mixed with row houses for a white-collar community. However, the meeting between different social categories in the residential area was sometimes problematic. The school acquired a bad reputation that proved difficult to remedy, when some of the early students were involved in criminal and drug related activities in their leisure time. Later, when immigration to Sweden increased, the mix of students came to include a diversity of ethnicities as well. When a market-based school system was introduced in Sweden, including parents’ free choice of school, school vouchers, private schools and competition for students between schools, the conditions for individual schools changed radically. The bad reputation of Lake School became an important issue. The teachers at Lake School talked about growing difficulties in recruiting students and that the local press linked their work with social problems to the bad reputation. The school that previously had about 500 students and 50 teachers from primary and secondary level lost students and when the first interviews were conducted in 2007 there were about 120 students and 20 teachers left. The school’s attempt to attract students by launching itself as a place of diversity was unsuccessful, and the students from a white-collar background found their way to other schools. The Lake School was closed down in 2007.

The backdrop to the detailed analysis of the stories in this article is a previous analysis of the data (Author, 2012) where it became evident that a group of male teachers who early on were recruited to deal with the socially related problems at the school had a strong influence on the collegial culture in the school. All the teachers who were interviewed referred to this group of teachers in one way or the other. It is clear that they had worked at the school for many years and developed a jargon based on their authority to deal with student-related problems in a strict and efficient manner. However, we also noticed that the teachers who told the stories about these men took very different positions towards them. In some stories there was consensus, and in others conflicts about the values that these teachers stood for and clearly there were a lot of emotions involved when the stories were told.

5.2 Pride, humiliation and courage — Emotions in stories of teacher collegiality

In what follows we analyse the stories of three teachers who all talk about a group of teachers that used to have great influence at the Lake School during approximately 15 years of the school’s history. The aim of the positioning analysis in this section of the paper is to describe different emotional aspects of teacher collegiality emerging from the analysis of positioning in the stories and in the storytelling (levels 1 and 2 in Bamberg’s (1997) model). The third level of positioning analysis is addressed in the last section of the paper.

The stories, Glory days, Not a second rate teacher, and It had to stop, actualize positive and negative emotions related to experiences of teacher collegiality.
5.2.1 Glory days – pride, trust and disappointment

Hedwig has been working as a literature teacher for thirty-five years at the Lake School and she had recently retired at the time of the interview. Her story about her colleagues can be seen as designed as to show the interviewer the kind of teacher she has striven to be during her long career. She provides the interviewer with detailed information about this specific group of former colleagues, including full names and descriptions of their dispositions as teachers in ways that make pride, trust and disappointment emotional aspects of teacher collegiality in her story. The story begins with a description of her first meeting with these colleagues when she started to work at the school. The transcript begins a little way into the story, with a detailed description of the teacher discipline she observed in her colleagues and that she as a new teacher at the school wished to achieve for herself.

Transcript 1: Hedwig
The characters figuring in the story are Hedwig herself, five individually named teachers, the men as a group, and more indirectly, pupils. As a group and as individuals, these teachers are positioned in relation to the pupils as tough authorities through the ways in which Hedwig describes them as “strict”, “competent”, “strong”, “in control”, “setting the conditions” and as keepers of “discipline”. This position is further strengthened through the description of how things became more “slack” when one of these “strong” men, the superintendent teacher, retired. This remark indirectly positions other teachers at the school who did not belong to this group of strong men as lacking what these men had. In a similar manner, the pupils are...
positioned as a faceless group of *troublemakers who need to be kept in order*. There is one exception to this main layout of the story, and that is the positioning of John Carlsson as *caring* for the pupils through the descriptions of him as looking out for the students’ “wellbeing” and as “keeping an eye open” for them and being “appreciated” by them for this. Here, the pupils are positioned as *in need of looking after and care* in a different way, making the main layout stand out even more. As a story character, Hedwig herself is quite peripheral. She is positioned as one of many other teachers who are *disappointed about the decline in discipline* after the superintendent teacher retired, and at the end of the story, as once being a *grateful newcomer* to the school through the description of her as “struggling with similar concerns” as the other teachers and who are given the privilege of being able to “join” this group of men.

The emotional aspects of teacher collegiality that are preformed through the telling of this story are visible through the way that Hedwig positions herself in relation to the interviewer as *proud of having belonged* to this group of strong teachers who imposed order and discipline and as having *trusted their competence*. At the same time, she positions herself as being *disappointed in the ending of an era* through her description of the decline in discipline after the retirement of the strong superintendent teacher. When she provides the interviewer with an orientation as to why she tells this story, she says that it is “what I wanted to achieve and tried to do”. The ways in which she describes herself as “wanting” and “trying” and the ways she makes the group of teachers the main characters of the story can be seen as a way for her to position herself as *not wanting to appear overly self-confident* in the eye of the interviewer. Another interesting aspect of Hedwig’s storytelling is the way she emphasizes that this group of teachers was “men”. She does that three times while telling this short story, “these men were strict”, “he was strong and so were these other men” and “handpicked men”. Through this emphasis on gender categories Hedwig positions herself as having belonged to a group of teachers whom she at the same time seems to have *admired from a distance* that could never really be bridged.

The next story involving this particular group of teachers makes relevant emotional aspects of teacher collegiality in a different way.

5.2.2 *Not a second rate teacher - Humiliation, indignation and pride*

Maria is a teacher in home economics and she worked at Lake School for a few years. Her story deals with experiences of the subject of home economics being regarded as less important than other subjects by the same group of colleagues. The story can be seen as designed to defend the subject of home economics and its teachers against a ghost audience (Langellier, 2001) of sceptics. Unlike Hedwig, she does not provide the interviewer with detailed information about the people involved. Instead, she describes what was said and her own reactions and feelings towards this in ways that make *humiliation, indignation and pride* emotional aspects of teacher collegiality visible in the story. When Maria starts telling this story, she had been talking to the interviewer about how home economics classrooms tend to be located away from the main school building, as if it was not an important school subject. The story can be said to serve as an example of what she wants to say.
Transcript 2: Maria

Maria  I know that one time when we were discussing pupil’s choice. So, yes what subjects should pupils have to choose from? And then someone said that it had to be home economics, because it’s so important for the pupils to get out to you, it was described as getting out. Yes, and, and I don’t know exactly how that teacher expressed himself, but it was something associated with relaxation.

Interviewer  Yea yea

Maria  And then I get like, okay is that how you view our subject? That it’s a little relaxing.

Interviewer  Yea yea

Maria  But that doesn’t feel very nice.

Interviewer  No no

Maria  Because, when you have a teacher training similar in length to many others, and you try to do a as good a job as possible, and you are expected to grade and assess, obviously you don’t see it as relaxation.

Interviewer  No no

Maria  Yes, so it was like, yes and then, it was like, I don’t need to name names, absolutely not, but it, he who was mentor in this kind of annoying group. I don’t know what he told his pupils, but in the staff room he could say like, I don’t remember exactly but, here comes miss bun, and that kind of comments. And I hadn’t experienced that before in other schools.

Interviewer  Yea yea

Maria  So it’s absolutely nothing

Interviewer  Yea ok

Maria  Nothing exceptional really, but it’s the attitude of some elderly gentlemen (laughs)

The characters figuring in the story are, apart from Maria herself, a group of teachers talking about pupils’ choice, pupils in general, a teacher making a comment about home economics, a group of pupils, their mentor, home economic teachers as a collective, and some “elderly gentlemen”. Maria and home economic teachers in general are positioned as being seen as teachers of a different kind by the other teachers in the story. This position is resisted through the positioning of home economic teachers as professional, with a similar education and performing the same professional work as other teachers. The two teachers who are given a voice in the story are positioned as ignorant of home economics as a school subject and as insulting Maria through their comments on home economics as “relaxation” and on Maria as
“Miss Bun”. The positioning of Maria as humiliated, ridiculed and insulted is somewhat downplayed by the description of the two teachers as elderly and different from other teachers in the school, by which they are positioned as not worthy of being taken seriously. As in Hedwig’s story, the pupils figure as an anonymous group and are positioned as potentially hearing derogatory remarks about home economics from teachers.

Through the way in which Maria tells this story to the interviewer, emotions of humiliation, ridicule and pride emerge as aspects of teacher collegiality. Maria’s description of her reactions to what was said about home economics as a form of “relaxation” for pupils, and to being called “Miss Bun” in front of other teachers in the staff room, positions her in relation to the interviewer as outraged at having been humiliated and ridiculed by her former colleagues. Her use of reported speech in the telling of what the two teachers said works to render her account of the situation believable and positions her as a believable witness to the storied events in relation to the interviewer. As a whole, the story can be seen as designed to position Maria as proud of being a teacher in home economics. Moreover, the ways in which Maria makes explicit that she could but will not name names position her as someone who has moved on from these past experiences, and that they cannot hurt her anymore. A general evaluation of the story (Norrick, 2000) emerges through Maria’s description of the storied events as “So it’s absolutely nothing” and “Nothing exceptional really”.

The next story, also involving this particular group of teachers, makes relevant emotional aspects of teacher collegiality similar to Maria’s story, but in ways that to a greater extent involve pupils as subjects in teachers’ talk.

5.2.3 It had to stop – Annoyance, fear and courage
Annika is a teacher of science and she worked at Lake School for 33 years. Her story deals with experiences of confronting colleagues who called pupils names in the staff room. The story can be seen as designed to justify the act of criticizing colleagues to their faces, and to make sense of experiences of being bullied by the same colleagues. Unlike Hedwig and Maria, she provides the interviewer with detailed information regarding what she herself said and thought at the time of the storied events. The mode of storytelling is ironic, which can be understood as a way to create distance to what must have been a hard time. Annoyance, fear and courage emerge from Annika’s story and storytelling as emotional aspects of teacher collegiality. When Annika starts telling this story, she starts by giving it its own headline “The bullied teacher”, telling the interviewer that she often works like this in lessons and labs. At this initial stage of telling it is not clear who or what the story is about, but it is soon made clear that it is a story in which Annika figures as the main character.

Transcript 3: Annika
Annika: Yes, I was about to tell you. This is a kind of headline. I often use that in my lessons and labs.

Interviewer: Yes

Annika: ‘The bullied teacher’. I had some very outspoken and fun and nice and lovely colleagues. But they went overboard some times. And they did it verbally.

Interviewer: Ok

Annika: So, down in the staff room, when something had happened, they called the pupils names. I almost don’t dare to say it, fucking piss girls was one goats another, and there was more. I, I always disapproved, my brain said no. I thought it was a little unpleasant.

Interviewer: Yes

Annika: Yes, and I thought it’s just in that inner circle and nothing bad will come from it and so on.

Interviewer: No

Annika: But after I had heard this a couple of times I thought to myself Annika I thought, what would you think, I don’t have a daughter but, if your daughter went to a school where a teacher called her a fucking piss girl? I would think it dreadful. And then I thought, if they dare to talk about pupils that way, then damn if I don’t dare to speak my mind. So I faced them. And I said it like this, if I have a pupil, or if your own child goes to a school, would you like if anyone said that? I know it’s not badly intended, but. You’re very sweet colleagues, you’re really good teachers and the pupils like you. But can we try to end this jargon? It was a sensitive subject. It wasn’t good.

Interviewer: No

Annika: That I said.

Interviewer: A little like swearing in church?

Annika: Exactly. But I said no more after that. Then it was, yes, the next day when I came to work and entered the staff room some started to go shh, the teacher is coming. I was bullied (laughs). Yes, I thought that’s good. What I said hit a sore spot. If they had continued to say things like that about pupils now and then. It wasn’t every day but now and then when something had happened. But, you know, and then this happened. And I thought, that’s good, but it was tough also. [talk about who was head teacher at the time] In some way and I don’t know how, it took, months later. And then, that thing ebbed out. And eventually no one cared about it. But they didn’t say those words any more.

The main characters in the story are Annika herself, the group of colleagues, pupils as an anonymous collective and an imaginary daughter. Annika is explicitly positioned as a teacher who was bullied by a group of unprofessional colleagues for speaking her mind about their calling pupils names in the staff room. The story depicts an event in which Annika is
positioned as a teacher who is *annoyed* with her colleagues’ behaviour, and who acts as a *defender of pupils* who pays the price of speaking her mind. The pupils are, as in Hedwig’s and Maria’s stories, positioned as an *anonymous collective* and also as *subject to insults* by teachers. The description of Annika thinking of whether to act or not positions her as *fearful and hesitant* in standing up to her colleagues. In this description of Annika’s thoughts, an imaginary daughter emerges that is positioned as being *in need of protection* from mindless adults. Annika’s final decision to act positions her as a *guardian of moral conduct* who becomes *frozen out* by her then *vengeful* colleagues who whispered ironical comments when she entered the staff room. At the end of the story, Annika is positioned as *victorious*, as the bad behaviour that had annoyed her in the first place came to an end.

Through the way in which Maria tells this story to the interviewer, *annoyance, fear* and *courage* emerge as emotional aspects of teacher collegiality. The story can be said to be designed to position Annika in relation to the interviewer as a *strong and courageous defender* of pupils in particular, and of teachers’ professional behaviour in general. What is striking about Annika’s storytelling, when compared to Hedwig’s and Maria’s, is the extensive use of reported speech (Koven, 2002) and the detailed descriptions of her own thoughts at the time of the storied event. The latter can be described as a form of reported (inner) speech or reported thinking. She recounts a kind of inner dialogue that works to position her in relation to the interviewer as a *cautious critic* who does not make rash judgement about colleagues. There is an ironic mode to her telling that also works to ridicule her colleagues’ words and deeds and position herself at the moment of the interview as *distanced from the whole thing*. The interviewer participates in this distancing irony by suggesting that telling the colleagues her mind was “A little like swearing in church?”.

6. Discussion

6.1 Emotions and teacher collegiality as a matter of micro-politics

In this section, we discuss what emotional aspects of qualities of relationships among staff members emerge from the three stories analysed in the paper, and how the teachers position themselves vis-à-vis culturally available narratives on teachers’ work and collegial relationships. This third level of positioning analysis (Bamberg, 2004) targets how cultural norms and values can be seen as shaping the local positioning of story characters and storytellers. The three stories all picture emotional dilemmas of some sort, all related to the interviewed teachers’ relationships with the same specific group of teacher colleagues. The ways in which they make sense of these dilemmas makes relevant cultural narratives of teachers’ work. Cultural narratives of teachers’ work transcend the here and now of the interview situation and work to justify their positions as story characters and storytellers.

The cultural narratives on teachers’ work that emerge from our analysis of these stories concern teachers’ responsibility to: *discipline and foster their students*, to get *engaged in the subject* they teach, and finally to *care for their students*. In the first story, Hedwig seeks consensus with ideas of order and discipline that in her view were central to a collegiality in the past, and opposes the present lack of commitment and control. A culturally available narrative on teacher’s responsibility to uphold discipline to foster learning can be seen behind
the feelings of trust in the former colleagues and pride in how they dealt with students involved in Hedwig’s storytelling. The narrative of teachers’ obligation to foster their students was embedded in the school’s history of being a place where different social categories of people would meet and is of great importance to her as a teacher who had been working there during her whole career. The second story, however, describes a case of competence betrayal (Hargreaves, 2002), focusing on the conflicting interests and differences in status between school subjects and teachers in the school. The feelings involved in Maria’s story signals a break with norms stressing a difference in status between different school subjects and teacher categories (see e.g., Cowie, 2011). The humiliation of being ridiculed and marginalized is met with references to a cultural narrative of teachers committed to the school subject they teach. The final story bears witness to a conflict between the narrator and the teachers using the jargon, and stresses the cons of a collegiality that risks conserving unsound ideas and values that subordinate pupils in relation to adults in school. Annika’s story makes sense in relation to the culturally available narrative of teachers caring for their students by protecting and respecting their rights. Interestingly, all three of these narratives are well established in the Swedish national curriculum and important parts of the teaching education program and as such are expected to be parts of all teachers’ professional work (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). The national curriculum consists of two parts. The first part is general and describes the basic values in Swedish schools, stressing teachers’ obligations to foster students to democratic citizens and to care for their wellbeing. The second part describes the learning goals for all school-subjects and has changed significantly since management by objectives were introduced in the national school system in 1994, and the learning goals are now defined in detail by the state. When the teachers talk about the group of colleagues, however, different narratives are stressed, and different emotionally charged positions are shaped. Embedded in these positions are different norms and moral claims of what is important in teachers’ work, and these claims are sometimes in line with and at other times in opposition to the values ascribed to the group of teachers that the stories are about.

These findings, we argue, problematize general and polarized descriptions of teacher collegiality in school. The storied experiences from the working lives of these three teachers make visible emotional aspects of what Hargreaves (1994) call micro-politics. They are in line with Hargreaves’ (2001, 2002) descriptions of how feelings of appreciation and betrayal are at stake when teachers shape their relations with colleagues and stress that friendship between teachers is not the norm (Hargreaves, 2001; Malm, 2009) and that norms of non-interference are common (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, 2009). These results also adhere to studies stressing that general descriptions of teacher collegiality fall apart in the face of teachers’ experiences of everyday school practice (Craig, 2013; Jurasaite–Harbison & Rex, 2010). Collegiality, we argue, is not just a result of what happens in everyday interaction, it also depends on what individual teachers value as important. The analysis of how different culturally available narratives enable different teacher positions stresses that collegiality is a matter of how common values and norms take shape as a result of processes of conflict and consensus in local school contexts. It allows us to put the description of the collegial community in the perspective of how different teachers position themselves in relation to more general norms of the teaching profession and how professional teachers should act. This,
we argue, questions the idea of using the concept of collegiality in the singular when referring to the quality of emotionally charged relations in a single school. Our argument is that, when evaluating “the quality of the relationships among staff members in a school” (Kelchtermans, 2006, p. 221), it is constructive to address the question of quality to whom? Taken broadly, our results show that these teachers in their stories position themselves and each other in several different ways that describe radically different emotional aspects of teacher collegiality in school.

7. Conclusions
The findings from our positioning analysis problematize an understanding of collegiality as either good or bad for teachers’ professional work and development that has been promoted in this field of research (Harris & Anthony, 2001; Jo, 2014; Leonard & Leonard, 2003; Shah, 2012a; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, 2009).

Based on the results in this study, the next step towards a less polarized view of teacher collegiality, we argue, is that research on for example teachers’ professional development, professional learning, commitment, attrition, or other areas that involve teachers relations in school, to a greater extent needs to address the emotional complexities in local school contexts. One-sided descriptions of pros or cons of collegiality in school or reductive descriptions of collegiality in terms of different forms might illustrate potentials or problems in teachers’ collaborative work in a general sense. If we really want to understand what happens in schools, and perhaps change it, however, we think that this study has convinced us that we also need to dig deeper into the ‘messy’ everyday relational and emotional aspects of teachers’ work. One way of doing this is to complement more general descriptions of teacher collaboration with more detailed analyses of individual teachers’ stories and emotions.
References
Bamberg, M. (2004). Form and functions of ‘slut bashing’ in male identity constructions in 15-year-olds: ‘I know it may sound mean to say this, but we couldn't really care less about her anyway’. Human Development, 47(6), 331–53.


