

AFTER EXCESSIVE TEACHER AND FACULTY ENTITLEMENT

Expanding the Space for Healing
and Human Flourishing Through
Ideological Becoming

Edited by Tara Ratnam
and Cheryl J. Craig

ADVANCES IN RESEARCH
ON TEACHING

VOLUME 47

**AFTER EXCESSIVE TEACHER AND
FACULTY ENTITLEMENT**

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**AFTER EXCESSIVE
TEACHER AND FACULTY
ENTITLEMENT:
EXPANDING THE SPACE
FOR HEALING AND HUMAN
FLOURISHING THROUGH
IDEOLOGICAL BECOMING**

EDITED BY

TARA RATNAM

Independent Teacher Educator and Researcher, India

AND

CHERYL J. CRAIG

Texas A&M University, USA



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Tara Ratnam, PhD, is an independent teacher educator and researcher from India. In her work with teachers, the difference she observed between what they advocated and its startling antithesis in their practice led her to study how culture and context interacted and influenced teachers' thinking and practice, creating a gap between their intention and action. A failure to link student learning to their cultural ways of knowing has motivated her to explore forms of pedagogical mediation, relationality, thinking, and development that could support teachers help students, particularly the socioculturally diverse and disadvantaged students, to learn with dignity and possibility.

Cheryl J. Craig, PhD, is a Professor, Houston Endowment Endowed Chair of Urban Education, and Program Lead of Teaching and Teacher Education at Texas A&M University. In addition to being her campus's Founding Director of the Collaborative for Innovation for Education, she is an AERA Fellow, a recipient of AERA's Division B Lifetime Achievement Award and AERA's Division K Legacy and Research Excellence Awards. She is also a recipient of the AERA Michael Huberman Award for Outstanding Contributions to Understanding the Lives of Teachers. Currently, she serves as the Chair of the International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching (ISATT).

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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Louis Botha, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer at the Wits School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He teaches sociology of education, inclusive education, and transformative education and research at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. His research is concerned with the marginalization and transformation of knowledges within contexts of teaching, learning, and research, drawing particularly upon indigenous knowledges in this regard. His research is generally framed within a cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) approach, using the principles and research interventions developed by CHAT researchers to explore possibilities for innovative change within educational contexts.

John Buchanan, EdD, is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Technology Sydney, where he has worked for more than 20 years. Prior to that, he taught at primary and secondary levels in NSW, Australia, mainly in language education. His main teaching and research interests include self-study and social and environmental education, focusing particularly on intercultural education. He has also researched and published extensively on teacher quality, attrition, and retention. His environmental education interests extend to researching about the conceptualization and uses of place and writing about his hometown, Sydney, Australia, a place for which he holds a deep love.

Marie-Christine Deyrich, PhD, is Professor Emerita of Applied Linguistics, English Studies, and Teacher Education at the University of Bordeaux, France. She is an active member of ISATT and AERA. She has been involved in several collective projects among which include: Language Learning for Active Social Inclusion, Pandemic Pedagogy: Educators' Practices During the Covid-19, and the Invisible College Symposia. Her writings deal with ethical language teaching in intercultural issues, linguistic policy, LSP, and learning and teaching in higher education. Her most recent writings deal with the impact of power imbalances and excessive faculty entitlement on doctoral supervision.

Jackie Ellett, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Art Education at Piedmont University. She taught art in Gwinnett County Schools for 32 years. Her varied experiences as a mentor and state and national leader equipped her with the skills to prepare future classroom educators for success. Her teaching accomplishments and dedication to art education have been recognized with state and national awards, including the Nix/Mickish Award for Lifetime Contribution to Art Education, 2022, and the NAEA National Elementary Art Educator of the Year,

1995. She was a contributing writer for the texts *Exploring Art*, *Art Talk*, and *Art Connections*.

Joanne Hardman, PhD, is a Professor and Deputy Director in the School of Education, University of Cape Town. A Psychologist by training, her research interests include using Cultural Historical Activity Theory to study pedagogy and child development; the use of tools such as ICTs on cognition and the development of Executive Functions in the brain and developing online applications to facilitate conceptual development among primary school children. She is the Secretary of the International Association of Cognitive Education and Psychology and African executive member of International Society for Cultural-Historical Activity Research.

Celina Dulude Lay, PhD, currently teaches as an Adjunct Instructor at Brigham Young University at the David O. McKay School of Education. She majored in Educational Inquiry, Measurement and Evaluation at Brigham Young University. Her research interest is in teacher educator knowledge. She is a regular contributor to the American Educational Research Association, especially in the methodologies of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practice (S-STEP) and Narrative Research SIG. She enjoys preparing teacher candidates in assessment, classroom management, adolescent development, TESOL K-12, instructional design, literacy in all content areas and ages, and supporting in-service teachers in professional development.

Warren Lilley, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education within the Psychology of Education stream. Developed through his extensive experience as an educator and teacher-trainer, his research focuses on digital equity and meaningful integration of technology within the classroom. His work empirically and theoretically explores these questions around educational transformation using formative-intervention methodologies, which focus on how educators and students can transform their classroom practices. Additionally, Warren continues to contribute his expertise and experience to the design and facilitation of national teacher development interventions and courses focusing on educational technology integration.

Cristiano Mattos, PhD, studied at the University of São Paulo (USP) investigating artificial cognitive systems. He is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Physics at the USP and currently the leader of the Research Group in Science and Complexity Education (ECCo). He works on the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory from a Freirean perspective, investigating the philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical foundations of teaching–learning of scientific and quotidian concepts, models of dialogic interaction, situated cognition, interdisciplinarity, and activity complexity, developing practical educational activities using science as an instrument to develop citizenship and democratic education for social and economic equity.

Joe Norris, PhD, is a Professor Emeritus at Brock University. He has received the 2015 Tom Barone Award for Distinguished Contributions to Arts Based Educational Research from AERA's Arts Based Educational Research SIG. He also has focused his teaching and research on fostering a playful, creative, participatory, and socially aware stance toward self and other and has taught courses in drama in education, applied theater, research methods (general, qualitative, and arts-based), and curriculum theory, among others at various universities. His book, *Playbuilding as Qualitative Research: A Participatory Arts-based Approach*, received AERA's Qualitative Research SIG's 2011 Outstanding Book Award.

Eliza Pinnegar, PhD, began her research journey while earning her undergraduate degree. She went on to graduate school, working with Dr D. Jean Clandinin. She attended community events at AERA. Her focus has been on school-aged children and their families' experiences inside school settings and outside. She has a passion for and has been an active member of the Narrative Research and S-STEP communities. She teaches for Anchorage School District. She has enjoyed serving in informal and formal capacities, advising budding researchers, reviewing journals, serving as program Chair, and contributing to the overall knowledge of the educational field.

Stefinee Pinnegar, PhD, is a graduate of the University of Arizona and an Emeriti Professor of Teacher Education from Brigham Young University. Her research interests focus on teacher thinking and practical memory, teacher educator knowledge, and teacher development through professional development. She has published articles in *Educational Researcher*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Studying Teaching*, and others. She has coauthored chapters in the most recent handbooks on teacher education and self-study of teacher education practices. She is a specialty editor of *Frontiers – Teacher Education* and coeditor of Emerald's *Advances in Research on Teaching* series.

André Machado Rodrigues, PhD, spent 10 years teaching Physics at an urban high school in São Paulo before assuming his current role as an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Physics, University of São Paulo. There, he leads the Physics Demonstrations Laboratory and coordinates the Teacher Instruction Program in Physics. As a member of the Research Group in Science and Complexity Education (ECCo), André focuses on science teacher education and scientific concept formation within the cultural-historical activity theory framework. His recent research critically evaluates the science education research field, highlighting the importance of collaborative activities.

Tom Russell, PhD, is a Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Education, Queen's University. He retired in 2019 after 42 years at Queen's. His teaching focused on secondary school science (physics in particular) and the improvement of teaching. His research focused on reflection-in-action, how individuals learn to teach,

learning from experience and self-study of teacher education practices. He was a coeditor of the 2004 *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* and served as a coeditor of the journal *Studying Teacher Education* during its first 15 years of publication. He has published numerous book chapters and coedited more than a dozen books.

Richard D. Sawyer, PhD, is a Professor of Education at Washington State University, where he chairs the MIT Secondary Certification Program. His scholarship intertwines reflexive, dialogic qualitative methodologies with curriculum theory. Working with Dr Joe Norris, he originated duoethnography and has written extensively about it. He has published a number of books and articles on curriculum theory and qualitative methodologies, including duoethnography. With Joe Norris, he was a recipient of the American Educational Research Association's Qualitative Research SIG's 2011 Outstanding Book Award for *Duoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research*.

Ge Wei, PhD, is an Associate Professor and the Director of the Research Center for Children and Teacher Education, Capital Normal University, China. He is a Visiting Professor of Tampere University, Finland, and also the scientific council member of Center for Activity Theory at University West, Sweden. He draws on cultural-historical activity theory in studies of learning, teaching, and human development in a range of contexts, including schools, families, and societies. Besides, he prefers to inquire narratives to understand experiences of educators. His recent monograph is entitled *Reimagining Pre-service Teachers' Practical Knowledge: Designing Learning for Future* (Routledge, 2023).

Jack Whitehead, PhD, is a former President of the British Educational Research Association, a Distinguished Scholar in Residence Westminster College Utah, and a Visiting Professor at Brock University, Ontario. He is a Visiting Professor at Ningxia Teachers University, China; the University of Cumbria in the United Kingdom and North-West University in South African present. He is a reviewer and member of the editorial board of the *Educational Journal of Living Theories* and a reviewer for *Action Research; Educational Action Research; Teaching and Teacher Education; Practitioner Research in Higher Education*. In 2023, he received an Honorary DLitt from the University of Worcester.

FOREWORD

EXCESSIVE ENTITLEMENT: TRYING TO GRASP THE UNGRASPABLE

At the entrance to Auschwitz, the first thing that stares at you is George Santayana's famous warning to humanity: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Wars and pestilence and the pain of hate and oppression that surround us today seem like the price we are paying for not heeding, not listening. What makes us use our human potential for violence and inhumanity rather than for peace and respect? Gunter Grass avers that "Auschwitz can never be grasped." However, what gives me hope and makes me persevere in grasping the ungraspable is the innate human aspiration for the ultimate good, the utopian ideals that every one of us shares regardless of our dystopian actions.

My personal utopia is underlined by the value of inclusivity borne by the Upanishadic mantra of peace, "Om sarve' bhavantu sukinah," which speaks to collective well-being and happiness. However, my appeal to this value did not originate from any Upanishad. It came to me as *living knowledge* witnessing my father's way of life. As a doctor, his healing touch and human concern did not know class or caste differences, the common prejudices of his time. His compassion has left an indelible impression on me.

The human inconsistency between espoused values and actual practice became a matter for sober contemplation in the dissonances I experienced when I attempted to put my values to practice as a teacher, teacher educator, and researcher. Trying to apprehend the seeming resistance by teachers to reform efforts led me to the notion of "excessive teacher entitlement" – a proclivity among teachers to adhere to scripted practice that militates against the need for adaptive flexibility from them. Cheryl Craig enriched this idea by bringing in the perspective of faculty entitlement in higher education settings as a close counterpart. As Dewey (1910, p. 19) points out, naming the phenomenon "helped pin it for investigation, and gave the motive for becoming conscious of our knowledge of experiences to which we had not hitherto applied our own mind."

Studies piloted to uncover the sources of teacher intransigence and the public-deficit image of them revealed the presence of "excessive entitlement" as a critical and pervasive issue in schools and universities (Ratnam & Craig, 2021): it manifests itself as pushing back change, professional jealousy, competitiveness, and aggression among teachers and faculty. These undesirable behaviors perpetuate existing inequities in institutions of education meant to be

democratically inclusive. They create a toxic work environment that undermines trust, collaboration, and innovation. However, the studies also laid bare the relational complexity of teachers' and educators' work, exposing the ubiquitous presence of excessive entitlement in the whole system, encompassing all actors working at various levels of educational hierarchy. Everyone is entangled hopelessly in the web of excessive entitlement, consigned to be harmed and to harm others. In these discursive dynamics, teachers and educators fail to get the recognition, respect, and support for their efforts. These unmet expectations make them vulnerable, and they use excessive entitlement as a way to cope, but this also makes them less aware of themselves. When teachers and educators are not self-aware, they judge others harshly. They blame students for their problems and ignore their own shortcomings.

In the Afterword to the book, "Understanding excessive teacher/faculty entitlement: Digging at the roots" (Ratnam & Craig, 2021), Stefinee Pinnegar asked, "After Entitlement What?" This sounded a clarion call to engage further with the notion of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement as a way to address afresh the "conundrums" that have dogged teaching and teacher education such as theory–practice divide and promoting teacher change. In response, the present volume proposes to bring together promising approaches to help teachers/educators negotiate the *living contradictions* (Whitehead, 1989; also, Chapter 10 in this volume) they experience in their sociocultural and institutional milieu and reclaim the agency stolen from them by the excessive entitlement enshrouding their self-awareness. Those living contradictions are the conflicts between what they believe and what they do or what they want and what they have. Such conflicts can harm them by posing a threat to their professional, emotional, and moral survival and by making them recourse to excessive entitlement. The healing touch to excessive entitlement involves importantly the promotion of teachers and educators' "ideological becoming" (Bakhtin, 1981) – a holistic process of learning and development that involves re-creating identities and social relationships by changing their "way of viewing the world" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 333) in dialogue with others' worldviews. The heightened self-awareness and respect for diversity developed through dialogue increases the possibility of cocreating a better learning and working environment for all. Teachers and educators can also achieve the shared utopian goal of fairness and inclusion.

How does the wisdom gained from my lived story connect to the larger human story of hatred, oppression, and violence that I began with? People seem to think that hatred for and destruction of others is inevitable for self-preservation. It has taken me the journey of a lifetime to make sense of the apparently simple but profound Upanishadic aphorism that individual happiness is a collective phenomenon – that is, the path to individual happiness and well-being runs through collective happiness and well-being. Might not this similar realization spur us to expand the space for the utopian vision of human flourishing in communities of educational practice and social life, which are threatened by systemic challenges from poverty, exclusion, climate, war, pandemic diseases, and technological disruptions such as the advent of AI?

Tara Ratnam
Independent Teacher Educator and Researcher, India

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INTRODUCTION: THE HEALING TOUCH TO EXCESSIVE ENTITLEMENT: BRINGING HUMANITY BACK INTO EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

Tara Ratnam

Independent Teacher Educator and Researcher, India

ABSTRACT

This introductory chapter begins by outlining the background of this book: how the concept of excessive teacher entitlement took shape and was progressively enriched through my collaborative work with Cheryl J. Craig. Our ongoing informal dialogues gave rise to an invisible college where we co-created new meanings to deepen the understanding of professional inertia. We saw professional inertia as a manifestation of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement constantly adrift in a yin and yang relationship with their best-loved self. This insight came from challenging the narrow mainstream view of the notion of excessive entitlement as a purely volitional act of autonomous individuals which leads to blaming and pathologizing teachers/faculty. Instead, a Vygotskian cultural-historical perspective is proposed. This perspective facilitates a more complex historicized view of the phenomenon by directing attention to the historically and culturally mediated nature of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement and the means to alleviate it. The healing touch to excessive teacher/faculty entitlement repeatedly surfaces as humanizing pedagogy. This involves helping teachers/faculty develop empowered entitlement and work towards realizing their dreams, their best-loved self. Finally, this introductory chapter provides a brief overview of the 15 chapters that follow. They explore the notion of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement in diverse sociocultural contexts and examine promising approaches to address

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this problem from different theoretical and methodological angles. You are invited to join us in this rich journey of inquiry and transformation.

Keywords: Excessive teacher/faculty entitlement; best-loved self; empowered entitlement; humanizing pedagogy; professional inertia; transformative agency

EXCESSIVE TEACHER ENTITLEMENT: COMING TO THE TERM

Excessive entitlement is a sense of arrogance that stems from a lack of self-awareness. It is about the inconsistency between who people think they are and who they are not. This unawareness makes one's expectations of self and others unreasonable, with one's expectations exceeding the social norms of one's deservingness (Fisk, 2010). For example, teachers feel self-righteous about their established practices and expect students to perform well, although their teaching may not meet the needs and preferences of their students. They may feel victimized by students who, according to them, are lazy and incompetent. A classic illustration of this can be seen in an excerpt from what a teacher I was interviewing on a project with English as Second Language (ESL) teachers said: 'After teaching, explaining both in English and Kannada [Students' vernacular], I ask questions, make them repeat answers. I make them write in class and ask them to write again at home. After all this, I ask them to answer the test, I don't know what happens. They don't remember the answers. I don't know what else I can do. I think I'll have to open their heads and pour it in' (Ratnam et al., 2019, p. 10). I developed the idea of 'excessive teacher entitlement' while trying to grasp this paradox, which has been gnawing at me for decades in my work with teachers – specifically, why are teachers not open to learning and change despite being overly concerned about the success in school and life of the multiculturally diverse students they teach? What prevents them from being flexible, adaptable and responsive to the needs of their students in rapidly changing educational, social, environmental and technological contexts? Why do they blame students, parents or administrators for their own failures or shortcomings (Ratnam & Craig, 2021)?

ENRICHING THE NOTION OF EXCESSIVE TEACHER ENTITLEMENT: THE EMERGENCE OF AN INVISIBLE COLLEGE

The philosophical topic of human inconsistency underlying my preoccupations with the notion of excessive teacher entitlement reverberated with Cheryl J. Craig's and others' experiences in higher education, adding the dimension of 'faculty' to excessive teacher entitlement. The nascent theme of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement knit us informally in our ongoing interactions. Our regular communication and exchange of ideas that took place outside academic walls

became what others term an ‘invisible college’ (Crane, 1972), a productive collaboration where knowledge and practices are advanced outside shared institutional boundaries. Our collaborative work on the concept helped us present to the field of teaching and teacher education a concept hitherto unexplored (Ratnam & Craig, 2021; Ratnam et al., 2019). We were able to co-construct new knowledge in the *third space* created by the diverse locations from which we interacted about our common interest in understanding professional (teacher and faculty) inertia: Cheryl J. Craig joined the inquiry with a research background in studying how pre-service and in-service teachers’ ‘personal practical knowledge’ (Clandinin, 1985) evolved in their knowledge communities (Craig, 1995a, 1995b), and how it influenced their knowledge, actions and identity in context. I worked closely with teachers, using the cultural-historical lens afforded by Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986). This showed me that teachers’ thinking and action came from a space neither completely personal nor entirely social but a blend of both. That finding made me realize that teachers and educators were not solely responsible for their resistance. It pointed to the need to shift the focus from teachers per se to studying the phenomenon of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement, to understand how it mediated teacher and faculty intransigence. Meanwhile, Cheryl’s work on Schwab’s concept of the ‘best-loved self’ – which relates to the ideal teacher identity that they aspire to achieve (Craig, 2020; Schwab, 1954/1978) – helped us use it as the complementary yet contrasting aspect of excessive entitlement, evoking their yin and yang dynamics (Ratnam, 2021), which are always shifting and never fixed.

Fig. 1 helps to position complex concepts of excessive entitlement and the best-loved self with respect to each other. There is no static boundary between them. They are constantly calibrating. Together, the language of ‘excessive teacher/faculty entitlement’ and the teacher’s/faculty’s ‘best-loved self’ reflect the two developmental facets of teachers and educators, shaping their knowing, being



Fig. 1. Yin–Yang Relationship Between Excessive Entitlement and the Best-Loved Self.

and becoming in unique cultural and social contexts (Ratnam, Chapter 2 in this volume). This representation exhibits how expanding the space for one affects the space for the other and helps us assess whether our actions increase excessive entitlement or lead to growth in the best-loved self.

Further explorations and reflections pushed my thinking to see that the exercise of teachers' transformative agency – towards achieving their best-loved self – involved the development of a concept I have named *empowered entitlement*. Empowered entitlement 'comes from being aware of oneself and the consequences of one's actions so that the decision one makes is humane based on an understanding of the other' (Ratnam, Chapter 2 in this volume). Infusing more humanity in teaching through empowered entitlement is an important aspect of remediating excessive teacher/faculty entitlement. It brings teachers and faculty more in tune with their best-loved selves.

THE MAINSTREAM VIEW OF EXCESSIVE ENTITLEMENT AND ITS DRAWBACK

The pervasive feelings of deservingness and the exaggerated expectations that characterize excessive entitlement are seen largely as a personality vulnerability in mainstream psychology (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). This behavioural view is dominant in organized workplace settings such as education and industry (Fisk, 2010). A synchronic view of the phenomenon limited to its individualist psychological dimensions here and now restricts the focus of research to a study of the psychological correlates of excessive entitlement (e.g. Hart et al., 2020), its impact and the strategies to cope with it, without the necessity of analyzing its cultural-historical precursors (Ratnam et al., 2019). Consequently, we are left with a partial view of the problem and with solutions that fail to address the issue at its roots. In teaching and teacher education, this outlook gives rise to a deficit view of teachers and educators (Ratnam, 2021; Chapter 2 in this volume; Lay et al., Chapter 11 in this volume) and serves to reinforce the systemic narrative that legitimizes the neoliberal emphasis on stringent outcome-based accountability of teachers and educators, curtailing their autonomy (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Mikser & Goodson, 2020).

A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL VIEW OF EXCESSIVE ENTITLEMENT AND ITS ADVANTAGE

The cultural turn in psychology made visible the relational and contextual aspects of psychological processes, providing an alternative to unduly 'interiorized' views of how the mind develops (Kirschner & Martin, 2010). The cultural-historical perspective of Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the constitutive role of others and the world in the formation of our thinking and its transformation as mediated by culturally evolving signs and artefacts (Kozulin, 2024). These culturally evolving signs and artefacts link individual psychological processes to social processes,

giving the development of individual mind a cultural-historical dimension. This dialectic between the individual and cultural processes shifts consideration of psychological functions from a synchronic angle to one that is diachronic. It extends our understanding of human thinking ‘as inherently situated in social, interactional, cultural, institutional and historical contexts’ (Wertsch, 1991, p. 86).

The insights from cultural-historical perspective have implications for not only how we analyze and interpret excessive teacher/faculty entitled behaviour but also how empowered entitlement for realizing one’s best-loved self is developed. Teachers’ knowledge of teaching does not develop in isolation, but as they contribute to the practical activity of teaching as mediated by culturally available tools and embedded in a ‘system of social relationships’ (Leontiev, 1981, p. 47). Since cultural tools and social relationships can both facilitate and constrain teacher development and change, a comprehensive study of both manifestations of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement and the development of empowered entitlement needs to be undertaken by considering the resources and constraints of educators’ historical, cultural and social contexts (Ratnam, 2021). The major advantage in following a cultural-historical perspective lies in the assistance it provides to unveil the relational and contextual complexity of teachers’ and educators’ work. By exposing the system and social relationships that mediate to produce the bane of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement, we can stop pathologizing teachers/faculty and consider what might be wrong with the cultural system shaping the context in which their activity is embedded.

THE HEALING TOUCH TO EXCESSIVE TEACHER/ FACULTY ENTITLEMENT

Excessive Entitlement as Teacher Resistance to Change: Dehumanizing Pedagogy

The historically and culturally developed thinking and practices, in their current, dominant, neoliberal formation, provide the tools for shaping teacher/faculty thinking and practice. These tools are characterized by competitive educational mores within a context of high-stakes accountability. Competition as the criterion of success makes people antagonize each other and regard every difference as a benefit for one and a loss for another. Teachers are drawn into this vortex of competition as their image of successful teachers is increasingly determined by the measure of success their students achieve (Ratnam, 2021). In the race to prepare all students for a standard test using the prescribed uniform curriculum, the differentiated needs of culturally diverse students are ignored, and their poor performance is seen as a deficiency. Teachers’ concern to preserve their self-image in the face of experiences of failure makes them feel excessively entitled to recourse to scripted instruction to fulfil external mandates – overriding the need to become self-aware by questioning those practices critically, as typified by the ESL teacher quoted above. This situation is dehumanizing for both students and teachers as it stifles their human potential for agency and freedom: On one hand,

students lose the voice and identity with which to engage in ‘educational activity’ (Davydov & Markova, 1982) that renders learning personally interesting and relevant – and therefore meaningful to them – while, on the other hand, teachers surrender their agency as ‘self-governing agents of their own expectations’ (Webb, 2005, p. 204), compromising the professional values of equity and inclusivity they hold as persons.

Humanizing Pedagogy With Resistance for Change: Developing Empowered Entitlement

Teachers’ work is anchored in the inherent tensions created by the opposition between normative standards and procedures set by the institution of education that concerns itself with objective outcomes on one hand and on the other, the subjective states or personal interests, goals, values, knowledge and beliefs of teachers and students driving pedagogical processes (Olson, 2003). These tensions are swept under the carpet in the vertical relationship established by the hierarchical institutional structure, where compliance is a virtue. Teachers become complicit with the institutional norms and values that cloak larger political and economic interests. These norms and values make believe that equality of opportunity is ensured by subjecting all students to a uniform curriculum. This belief induces a delusive state where teachers lack the motive to disturb the status quo and become critically conscious of the growing inconsistency between what they want and what they do.

In my career-long efforts to demystify this illusion, I have come to understand that teacher resistance *to* change and teacher resistance *for* change are aspects of teachers’ excessive entitlement and best-loved self – their *being* and *becoming*. Excessive teacher entitlement, as resistance *to* change towards realizing their best-loved self, binds them to status quo through an unawareness of themselves and their potential for agency and freedom; whereas, resisting externally mandated changes *for* changing themselves – and the situation they are in with students – helps them reclaim their image of best-loved self.

Resistance *for* change leads to humanizing pedagogy as teachers work with a heightened sense of self-realization that includes sensitivity to the unique needs of diverse students within the changing social and educational context. Humanizing pedagogy promotes equity and social justice by respecting and valuing students’ culture and experiences and giving voice to students to understand and nurture what they want and find worthwhile based on their interests, potential and aspirations – rather than based on what the system imposes upon them in a banking model of education to serve vested interests (Freire, 1970). This approach positions teachers and students horizontally in a space of *ideological becoming* as they engage in a dialogic meaning-making process with equal rights to pose questions and agree or disagree (Bakhtin, 1981). These dialogues increase the possibility of getting over biases and prejudices by seeing people, situations and things in a new light.

It should be noted that the realization of teachers’ best-loved self is also not a static ideal that can be achieved and fixed by a one-time effort. We must remind

ourselves here that teachers are not totally autonomous despite their potential for agency and freedom – an insight born from a cultural-historical perspective. Their thinking, like all human thinking, is relational and blooms from interactions with others within a developing cultural historical context. Emerging dissonances created by interacting forces in the discursive context of teachers' practice give rise to fresh gaps between what they want and what they have, thus engaging educators in an ongoing process of becoming as they vacillate between excessive entitlement and the best-loved self. Another point to note is that the move towards the best-loved self, marking a shift in teachers' position from excessive entitlement to empowered entitlement, cannot occur without them owning their excessive self-entitlement and recognizing that it is a barrier to their own and others' growth (Ratnam, Chapter 2 in this volume). Thus, excessive teacher entitlement is an enabling tool for realizing teachers' best-loved self by promoting the development of empowered entitlement through critical self-reflexivity.

THE VOLUME

This volume is a compilation of the work of educational researchers who are passionate about making a difference in the world by helping themselves and their students and colleagues to become more intentional and resist being pushed towards the abyss of excessive entitlement. They uncover the hidden creative potential in the unique situations of excessive entitlement they have experienced. Each chapter has insights to offer for engaging in ways to grow one's sense of empowered entitlement towards achieving an ideal professional identity: the best-loved self.

Peer Review as a Self-Reflexive Tool

The book itself is the result of a process of dialogue engaging the authors in 'soul-searching', as John Buchanan put it. The intense peer review process of evaluating others' work also became a *mirror material* to evaluate the self: '—'s chapter threw me back on my chapter. Here are the questions I did not answer in my chapter' (Cheryl J. Craig). The critical evaluation of the other came from a *position of respect* acknowledging the other's scholarship. This made us willing learners, extending ourselves to new levels of understanding in the presence of the others and the unsettling questions raised by their diverse viewpoints: 'It's a little stressful because of time restrictions, but the challenge and the push to think critically about my work by how others think is transformative. It strengthens my resolve to resist the bureaucratic impositions that curtail our agency' (Cristiano Mattos). Providing feedback was also a deliberate process involving deep reflection: 'I had to reread and allow my thoughts to simmer a little before responding so that I was offering a response of reflection, not haste. Reflecting on this has been exceptionally helpful for me to review my own work from this new angle of vision I have gained – the benefit of the process' (Jacqueline Ellett).

These comments from the authors resonate with what André Sales (2023, p. xxi) points out, '[T]he meanings we create for some words are also constitutive of who we are trying to become'.

The Social Significance of This Book

This book is not a finished product but marks a particular stage in the continuous process of our *becoming*. It raises new questions for us and also for the readers by inviting them to join the conversation with wisdom gained from their own experience. It is through this process of becoming that we recover ourselves from the space of excessive entitlement that we fall into time and again, in the social world that we create and that shapes us.

Excessive teacher/faculty entitlement is a virulent social phenomenon emerging in the discursive context of their work and is not limited to teachers and faculty. It is endemic in the entire education system, in a chain of entitlements (Ratnam, 2021; Chapter 2 in this volume). Excessive entitlement also extends beyond the educational domain. It is a symptom of a wider social issue that can be traced back to the ancient philosophical question of human inconsistency between what people say and do, as raised by Socrates (Cooper & Hutchinson, 1997). This inconsistency lies at the root of discursive dynamics throughout society today, stressing the negative side of social, environmental and technological developments by inflaming bias and human irrationality. The results can be seen in ecological imbalances, poverty, ill health, various forms of oppression we face and the violence and hatred fomented through the use of technology to spread disinformation. Understanding, therefore, what produces excessive teacher/faculty entitlement and how to provide a healing touch to this malady could perhaps also have an ameliorative impact on addressing excessive entitlement as pervasive in the wider society.

LAYING OUT THE CHAPTERS

Section I: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a Way Forward From Excessive Teacher/Faculty Entitlement

The authors in this section use CHAT as a framework for analyzing the practices of teachers/faculty to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement. They offer a multidimensional systemic approach, which includes individuals' motives and mediating tools, as well as the dynamics of power, culture and history (Foot, 2014). CHAT facilitates an analysis of the complex, evolving, contextualized and mediated activity of teachers/faculty, where their tacitly-held excessive entitlement becomes a tool for self-reflection moving them towards transforming both the self and the activity in which they engage.

CHAT is built on Vygotsky's understanding of the mediated nature of individual's thinking and action. As pointed out earlier, cultural tools, artefacts and