

**AFTER EXCESSIVE TEACHER AND
FACULTY ENTITLEMENT**

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ADVANCES IN RESEARCH ON TEACHING VOLUME 47

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

EDITED BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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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?

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