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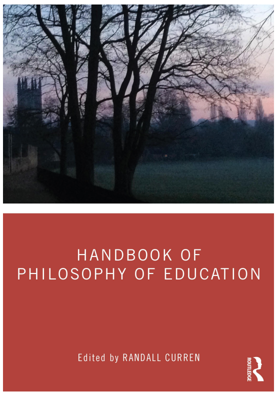

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BURNOUT, DEMORALIZATION, AND RACIALIZED FAILURES TO RECOGNIZE TEACHERS AS MORAL SUBJECTS

Doris A. Santoro

I have defined demoralization as "consistent and persistent frustrations in accessing the moral rewards of teaching" (Santoro 2011b: 3). The moral rewards, as I have described them, capture the moral (other- and craft-regarding) and ethical (personal flourishing) dimensions of the goods internal to a practice that teaching can offer (Higgins 2011; Green 1985; MacIntyre 1984). Demoralization occurs gradually and may become a chronic condition; it is rarely precipitated by a single event that presents as a discrete dilemma.

My development of the concept of demoralization emerged through a collaborative hermeneutic approach. I built, tested, and refined the concept in an iterative qualitative research process in collaboration with teachers (Santoro 2015). I saw a need to apply the concept of demoralization to teaching in order to provide an explanation for morally motivated teacher attrition (Santoro 2011a). Just as teaching enables some educators to find moral rewards through their work (Hansen 1995), I suspected moral and ethical concerns might motivate some teachers to leave their jobs. My first phase of this work studied experienced teachers who had left the profession (Santoro 2011a). Later, I extended the concept of demoralization to address persistent moral and ethical concerns for teachers who remained in their jobs, but who were seriously distressed (Santoro 2018).

For experienced teachers whose tenures exceed the five-year period of highest turnover, burnout is a common explanation for why they left. I have argued that applying the label of burnout to teachers when they are really experiencing demoralization is harmful because it is a misdiagnosis that fails to address the root cause of exhaustion, frustration, and sense of futility that stems from teachers' inability to do what Howard Gardner et al. have called "good work" (Gardner et al. 2001). I have also claimed that the diagnosis of burnout places the blame for these feelings on individual teachers because they are seen as having failed to conserve their personal resources (Santoro 2011b). Burnout suggests that teachers come with finite resources and their role is to appropriately pace themselves to mete those resources out over the long haul.

In addition to seeking a better description of morally motivated teacher attrition, my inquiry was a response to the primary data source on teacher attrition in the United States, the School and Staffing Survey and the Teacher Follow-Up Survey.[1] The data from these surveys show that the majority of teachers who leave the profession or who move to another school are "dissatisfied" (U.S. Department of Education 2016). This language has been taken up by researchers who study teaching

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and who advocate for better working conditions for teachers, including myself (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond 2017; Hodges et al. 2013; Moore 2012; Schutz & Zembylas 2009).

For instance, I have described the work I do as "philosophizing about teacher dissatisfaction" (Santoro 2015). I have argued that "[d]emoralization offers a more precise diagnosis of experienced teacher dissatisfaction" (Santoro 2018: 3). In numerous presentations to practitioners, I have sustained the discourse of teacher dissatisfaction by modifying it with the term "moral." My purpose was to engage with the largest data sources available about teachers' experiences and to intervene on a current conversation in the field of teacher research. I hoped, in part, to demonstrate how the constructs used in the surveys failed to ask normative questions and therefore limited the scope of understanding we might gain about educators' concerns about their work and teacher attrition.[2]

My characterization of demoralization as a *moral* form of dissatisfaction was a strategic move to import normative constructs into mainstream discussions of teachers' experiences of their work. The most recent phase of my research with educators of color has enabled me to recognize the shortcomings of characterizing demoralization as a moral form of teacher dissatisfaction for all teachers, but especially in the case of the teachers of color I have interviewed.

In my work, I am concerned with the everyday usage of terminology and how the philosophical concepts I build are taken up by those who are affected by them most directly. I believe that characterizing the normative concerns of teachers *merely* as a form of dissatisfaction, even if they are modified by the term "moral," could contribute to the trivialization of identity-conferring commitments (McFall 1987). Furthermore, I have come to believe that the language of dissatisfaction fails to capture the depth of experience that occurs when educators fail to be recognized as moral subjects. I will argue that the failure to recognize teachers' moral claims and, especially, to recognize teachers of color as moral subjects, is made worse when it is minimized as dissatisfaction. This unintentional minimization could activate what Cathy Park Hong (2020) calls "minor feelings" and further contribute to the effects of demoralization.

Dissatisfaction addresses a distinct dimension of wellbeing, and one that operates in a different realm from demoralization. Satisfaction entails the realization of pleasure through the actualization of one's desires. From one perspective in moral philosophy, we might argue that the good person would desire the good. However, in the parlance of the labor market, in which the majority of the teacher dissatisfaction discussion takes place, satisfaction entails the realization of preferences – a preference for autonomy, a preference for a lighter workload, a preference for a different kind of leadership, a preference for a different curriculum. This notion of dissatisfaction, framed in terms of preferences, perpetuates the consumer-oriented labor market notion of how to address teacher attrition. The discourse of job dissatisfaction can be demoralizing because it may perpetuate the misrecognition of teachers' moral motivations. The characterization of demoralization as a type of dissatisfaction misses the depth of harm that may occur when we fail to recognize teachers as moral subjects, especially when these failed recognitions are racialized – that is, impacted by perceptions of race.

As a White higher education-based researcher, I have partnered with K-12 educators and educators of color to explore the forms of demoralization encountered by experienced teachers of color.[3] Although I will be drawing on the interviews my team and I have conducted in a very limited way, what I have learned through our collaboration serves as the interpretive horizon of this chapter. Conducting research with educators of color has revealed the limitations of adopting the term "dissatisfaction." In doing so, I am not making empirical claims about educators of color but engaging in a conceptual refinement generated by new empirical evidence that demonstrated the weakness of characterizing demoralization as a form of dissatisfaction (Alcoff & Kittay 2007; Sullivan 2007).

The argument in this chapter represents my recognition that using the term "dissatisfaction" to describe demoralization might perpetuate demoralization by diminishing the moral significance of teachers' work. To make this argument, I will draw on Margaret Urban Walker's feminist moral framework to highlight the existential significance of moral recognition. Then, I will examine the violence of moral misrecognition and how the minimization of this experience as dissatisfaction could exacerbate what Hong calls "minor feelings." Using Lisa Delpit's early work, I will show how we require moral communities for moral recognition and may face moral burdens when trying to improve them from within.

Demoralization Is Not Simply Dissatisfaction

Teacher dissatisfaction is of major concern to policymakers, school leaders, and teacher educators in the United States. Teacher attrition has long been a challenge, but entry into the profession seems to be stalling as well. The United States has witnessed dramatic drops in enrollment in teacher education programs. Many states have set up commissions to recruit teachers, not just in traditionally hard-to-staff areas, and are considering lowering or removing licensure requirements. However, education labor economist Richard Ingersoll has argued that the United States cannot hire its way out of the teacher shortage. School leaders and policymakers must stem the tide of teacher attrition to meet present and future staffing needs (Papay et al. 2018).

In the last several years, many states and districts have made commitments to hire more educators of color (Philip & Brown 2020). Despite these efforts, the problem of attrition is even more pronounced for teachers of color. Although the percentage of educators of color hired across the United States has increased by 100% in the last 30 years, these gains have not resulted in coming closer to parity with the demographics of the student population. The rate of turnover for educators of color is 25% higher than that of their White peers (Ingersoll et al. 2017: 11).

I was curious if we could learn something new about teacher demoralization by focusing on educators of color. I also wondered if bringing a normative perspective might provide new avenues for addressing attrition in educators of color. I draw from Dorinda Carter Andrews et al. to explain the strategic value of studying teachers of color as a group, even though I recognize that this designation is an artificial grouping of diverse peoples and individuals. They explain

> While it would be inappropriate, and impossible, to make broad empirical claims about the moral life of all educators of color, there is strategic value in focusing on the experiences of teachers of color. Teachers of Color share sociopolitical histories of marginalization by education institutions, structures, policies, and practices, as well as transformative pedagogical and resistant community-based practices, in which positioning them from a group standpoint when theorizing and conducting research affords more comprehensive and complex understandings of their experiences.
>
> *(Carter Andrews et al. 2019: 10)*[4]

My research team and I began interviewing teachers of color with five or more years of experience in 2019. We continue to collect data and to broaden our perspectives on the moral and ethical concerns they encounter in their work.

Teaching for many educators can be an identity-conferring commitment (McFall 1987). That means that it is more than simply a job; it is one that is imbued with values that put one's sense of self at stake. Lynne McFall calls identity-conferring commitments those that "reflect what we take to be most important and so determine, to a large extent, our (moral) identities" (13). It is unsurprising, then, if teaching is a way to express the self and its moral commitments, that so many of the former teachers whom I've interviewed spoke of recovering, regrouping, and struggling to regain a sense of self after choosing to leave the profession. Teaching, for many practitioners, constitutes a moral identity as well as a professional identity. Identity-conferring commitments are "conditions of continuing as ourselves" (McFall 1987: 12). However, it is not simply the fact of being a teacher that is identity-conferring – it is the distinctiveness of the values that teachers bring to the work that confer their identities. So, it would not be the case that to be any kind of teacher would be identity-conferring, but that to embody particular values as a teacher is what confers the valued identity.

A number of studies focusing on attrition amongst educators of color highlight the significance of values that educators of color bring to their work. Their values are described as constitutive of who they are (i.e., identity-conferring) and serve as motivations for being in the classroom. For instance, in their study of Black and Latinx teachers, Dixon et al. (2019) reveal the close coupling of culture and values in their recommendations. They say, "Schools should be places that culturally affirm teachers of color, i.e., where the goals and values of the school match up with the goals and values of the teachers" (3). They found that "teachers of color stay in schools that have a commitment to equity, social justice, and the dismantling of racism" (Dixon et al. 2019: 14). The problem is not whether educators of color possess these values, but the struggles they encounter in trying to enact them in schools.

The Significance of Moral Recognition

Walker's (1998) "expressive-collaborative" model of morality shows the significance of teachers' value-laden commitments and helps us to understand how those commitments are identity-conferring. Feminist ethics aim to be both a correction to and an expansion of our moral epistemologies and are helpful in clarifying the nature of demoralization.

Walker explains that morality is expressed through "practices of responsibility" which include our actions and the narratives that we use to explain them. It is collaborative because we require others to recognize how we are expressing our responsibilities, and that recognition enables us to construct our sense of who we are.

> Morality allows and requires people to understand themselves as bearers of particular identities and actors in various relationships that are defined by certain values. People learn to understand each other this way and to express their understandings through *practices of responsibility* in which they assign, accept, or deflect responsibilities for different things.
>
> *(Walker 1998: 9, original emphasis)*

Describing morality as practices of responsibility will be intuitive to many teachers as will the need to have others recognize the circumstances and dilemmas that activate those practices. Teachers are responsible for the care and education of students. They are responsible to their communities, their schools, and their own families. Teachers are responsible for upholding civic virtues, the professional expectations of their field, and the standards of their content areas. This list could be extended – for responsibility is central to the work of teaching.

To what degree are these responsibilities, and the narratives teachers share about them, recognized? Walker's moral philosophy raises substantive questions about *how* and *when* and *for whom* moral claims are recognized as moral. In feminist moral theory, expressions and collaborations are situated in and impacted by contexts, particularities, identities, and their intersections with power hierarchies. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding the moral concerns of teachers who may be working in what I have called morally-constrained environments, where what one believes should be done cannot be done. Another form of moral constraint occurs when what counts as moral is limited to one perspective and there is no recognition for the possible plurality of moral positions (Santoro 2016). Walker's moral theory accounts for situations in which "responsibilities outrun control" (Walker 1997: 241) and the context-bound practices of responsibility that defy standardization.

Walker demands that those who engage in moral philosophy exercise more epistemological humility. It is only by seeking out the stories of differently-situated people that we can expand our notions of moral life; it is through narrative that we can begin to make sense of what differently situated people value. She explains, "Many situations cannot be reckoned with responsibly without seeing how people, relations, and even the values and obligations they recognize have gotten there" (Walker 1998: 110). Yet, it may also be the case that those values and obligations are less easily recognized for those who have not been in similar situations. There is always room to learn more through the narratives of others.

Practices of responsibility reveal who we are and what we value, but we depend on others to recognize us as engaging in practices of responsibility. Walker shows that there is vulnerability in expressing these narratives: "The very potential for intelligibility – for being understood as feeling what you are feeling and displaying what you are trying to express – may shift dramatically under the eyes of differently positioned viewers" (Walker 2007: 112). This interdependence also leads to the case that those who are similarly positioned may recognize our practices of responsibility more readily than others who are not.

This position does not need to be universalizing or essentializing, or even exclusionary, but it recognizes that social locations and identities seriously affect our interpretive frames.

> Both the environmental and interpersonal situations that confront people and provoke their [moral] feelings, and the ways people are apt to construe the nature and meaning of these situations, are affected by social experience conditioned by differences in social location, power, and opportunity. This leaves plenty of room for individual differences, but suggests at least that those who share many or particularly distinctive social experiences are equipped to find each other's emotional responses in certain situations more intelligible, apt, and more expressively legible than are others who do not share such experience.
>
> *(Walker 2007: 111)*

Walker explains that it could be more difficult to recognize moral claims when we occupy different social locations. It is an acknowledgement of our epistemological, and therefore moral, purview.

Walker's feminist ethics offers a corrective to traditional moral theory with its universalistic tendencies. Feminist ethics attends to contexts and subject positions. It calls upon us to listen more closely for moral concerns that do not align with our own, especially when engaged with people situated differently from ourselves. Teachers may more easily recognize the substantive moral content in their colleagues' narratives than non-educators do. Teachers of color may more easily recognize the values being challenged by simply *existing* as an educator of color than White teachers do. There is a built-in fallibility that requires we acknowledge the ways in which we could fail to hear the values expressed in others' narratives. This does not mean, however, that we are incapable of recognizing practices of responsibility across differences. It simply entails that we will need to have humility and do additional work to attend appropriately to the narratives that are shared across those differences.

To review, morality, according to Walker, is expressed through practices of responsibility and is collaborative because we rely on others to recognize our practices of responsibility. Through this process, our own understandings of morality and self may be modified. This recognition can fail in a few different ways, one of which is that others may not see our behaviors as forms of responsibility. For example, when Chicago teachers struck in 2019, in part to advocate for more nurses in schools, they saw themselves as exercising responsibility to the profession, to public schools, and to their students. However, some community members and pundits, and perhaps even some teachers, viewed the striking teachers as abdicating their responsibility to be present in their classrooms. This brief example reveals that practices of responsibility require an interpretive community to be recognized as moral, and that alternative moral interpretations are possible depending on how one is situated and how the value of responsibility is interpreted.

Demoralization and Moral Disqualification

One facet of the damage caused by misdiagnosing demoralization as burnout is moral disqualification. I already addressed how this form of misdiagnosis fails to recognize teachers' moral motivations by viewing the problem as the "burnt-out" teacher's lack of inner resources rather than their inability to access moral rewards of the work. The misdiagnosis of burnout also enacts moral disqualification *at the very moment teachers are making moral claims*. If we understand morality through practices of responsibility, then the labeling of teachers as burnt-out signals that they have failed to uphold their responsibilities. In failing to deliver on their responsibilities, they lose moral credibility. This can result in what I have termed the Cassandra-like syndrome of moral violence when moral claims are interpreted as madness (Santoro 2017). It occurs when teachers who make moral claims are not recognized as making moral claims.

Moral disqualification, experienced as a form of moral violence, can be one manifestation of teacher demoralization. This aspect of demoralization is a result of teachers failing to be recognized as making moral claims related to their professional roles. I have analyzed this situation for one woman teacher, Monica, when her moral claims were misrecognized by her district's paid consultants and her principal (Santoro 2017). My more recent interviews with educators of color have revealed a racialized dimension to moral violence. Several teachers of color have expressed the cognitive dissonance associated with failing to have their moral claims recognized in their professional roles, roles in which they are expected to be moral. To return to Walker's (1998) expressive-collaborative model – some teachers of color *expressed* moral concerns about their work, but within a workplace dominated by white norms, the collaborative piece of recognition was missing. The moral violence of failing to be recognized when making moral claims about their work, impeded their ability to reap the moral rewards of their work.

By virtue of their identities, some people will struggle to be heard as making moral claims; this phenomenon has shown up in interviews with teachers of many identities. However, it is only by focusing on the experiences of educators of color that the resounding theme of moral disqualification has emerged most significantly. It is for this reason that the characterization of demoralization as simply dissatisfaction seems most out of place. The serious and horrifying outcomes of a lack of moral recognition are evident in the dispossession of land and livelihood in settler-colonialism, the murders of Black Americans at the hands of police officers, the violence towards people of Asian descent in US streets, and the discourse of a sitting US president referring to Latinx peoples as criminals. To recapitulate Walker's argument: our moral lives are about our responsibility to others. These responsibilities are intelligible to ourselves and others because they are shared understandings. That is, we depend on others' regard to have our responsibilities and commitments recognized.

Educators of color may experience the minimization of moral misrecognition as simply dissatisfaction as another instance of minor feelings. Hong (2020) depicts minor feelings as one emotional response people of color may experience as a result of living in the conditions of interpersonal and institutionalized racism. They are the feelings that arise as the result of having one's interpretation of reality questioned, minimized, or misrecognized by those whose reality fails to take seriously their racialized lived experiences and the naming of those experiences. This imbalance of power attends directly to Walker's question that makes the expressive-collaborative nature of morality precarious: "Who sets the terms for moral judgment, and can all positions in a moral-social order find coherent expression in the moral terms that order provides?" (Walker 1998: 50).

Minor feelings are corrosive, explains Hong, because these felt, and racialized, experiences are difficult to convey because the dominant White American culture leaves no room for them to exist and be acknowledged. There is no room for them in the "moral-social order." Minor feelings are

> built from the sediments of everyday racial experience and the irritant of having one's perception of reality constantly questioned or dismissed. Minor feelings arise, for instance, upon hearing a slight, knowing it's racial, and being told, *oh, that's all in your head* … When minor feelings are finally externalized, they are interpreted as hostile, ungrateful, jealous, depressing and belligerent, affects ascribed to racialized behavior that whites consider *out of line*. Our [BIPOC's] feelings are overreactions because our lived experiences of structural inequity are not commensurate with their [White Americans'] deluded reality.
>
> *(Hong 2020: 55, 57, original emphasis)*

Minor feelings can show up as "paranoia, shame, irritation, and melancholy" (Hong 2020: 55). The complicated mixture of these emotions renders them unlikely to be correctly characterized because of the dominance of tropes of individualistic catharsis and overcoming obstacles. Hong explains that minor feelings are not "overcome *personally*, after which the individual experiences some kind of self-affirmation and release. Minor feelings by contrast, are ongoing, stuck; they are more true to the trauma of living in a racist, capitalist society" (O'Rourke 2020, original emphasis).

Minor feelings are related to the demoralization of teachers (particularly teachers of color) in two ways: they evoke negative moral feelings (shame, regret) that implicate the one experiencing them in wrongdoing, even though the wrongdoing may reside outside of the educator (such as institutional or interpersonal racism). Minor feelings address the moral disqualification involved in demoralization – that is, the moral claims and concerns are potentially dismissed as individualized emotions and personality failures (paranoia, irritation, melancholy) rather than recognized as practices of responsibility. Finally, minimizing demoralization as a form of teacher dissatisfaction could exacerbate minor feelings that may arise in this form of demoralization.

The Need for Moral Communities

Hong's description of minor feelings provides some insight into the impact of the well documented and often publicized moral concerns of educators of color, which are misrecognized, misconstrued, and continue to go unaddressed: "Because minor feelings are ongoing, they lend themselves more readily to forms and genres that are themselves serial" (Hong 2020: 57). This is also why we need the narrative of interviews that enable us to see teacher demoralization is not just about a particular moment or discrete dilemma. There is not sufficient space to devote to an interview-length narrative here, but one teacher condensed his narrative so succinctly that we can use it as an example.

Black Chicago Public School teacher Dwayne Reed explained his substantive moral concerns in a *New York Times* article profiling teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.[5] The article quotes him directly, "'Just the fact that I have to give grades to nine-year-olds right now doesn't seem morally right,' Mr. Reed said, noting that two of his students' grandparents recently died of COVID-19" (Singer 2020).

In this brief account, we can see the inadequacy of the term dissatisfaction, even when modified by "moral." If Reed's claim is reduced to "I don't want to give grades," it can be read as a personal preference. This preference could be understood as self-serving and a failure to fulfill his professional responsibilities. Perhaps Reed would rather develop his culinary skills instead of assessing students' work.

Instead, if we recognize Reed's claim as an expression of responsibility, we could imagine his statement emerging from the following questions: What are my responsibilities as a teacher? What are my responsibilities as a teacher of nine-year-olds? What are my responsibilities to nine-year-olds in a pandemic? What are my responsibilities to nine-year-olds in a pandemic whose grandparents recently died of COVID-19? What are my responsibilities in determining what is most important to my students and me within my professional role? These questions are relevant because of the context in which Reed is embedded. These questions of responsibility are raised against the backdrop of other responsibilities: What are my responsibilities as a teacher in Chicago Public Schools? What are my responsibilities to my colleagues? This community? This school? My profession? My family? Myself?

Even though Reed specifically uses moral language in highlighting his concern about assigning grades, the headline of the news story focuses solely on the material outcomes of what appears to be an assignment of blame to teachers. The subtitle reads, "Teacher burnout could erode instructional quality, stymie working parents and hinder the reopening of the economy." How might Reed's expression of his practices of responsibility be misrecognized? How could the application of the term burnout lead to Reed's moral disqualification? Might Reed experience the reframing of his moral concern as burnout as violence?

Elsewhere, I have suggested a two-pronged approach to remoralization: teachers identify and connect with an authentic professional community that affirms their values *and* policies, and practices and institutions need to change to enable teachers to enact their values (Santoro 2018). Walker's moral theory provides philosophical justification for the importance of these professional communities and reinforces the significance of shared values (Walker 1998: 66). What I mean by a "moral community" is not one in which no one ever transgresses shared expectations or everyone manages to live up to their responsibilities to self or others. Instead, a moral community is one in which one's narratives of responsibility are recognized by others, even when the narratives reveal that a person falls short of the shared values.

By being attuned to the moral content in these narratives there can be better recognition that individuals are making moral claims. Even within moral communities that share understandings of responsibilities and how to fulfill them, we will care about the credibility of the storyteller, and that may depend on their subject location (Walker 1998: 125). Read through the lens of dissatisfaction, a narrative might be dismissed as the failure to satisfy one's preferences. When narratives are recognized as conveying moral content, we can come to understand someone as being credible, reliable and having integrity. If we don't ever recognize the claim someone makes as moral, *how* we interpret that person and their behaviors will be dramatically different. For instance, the terms "burnout" and "dissatisfaction" each undermine the reliability of the educator as a moral narrator. "Burnout" suggests that the person recounting events failed to live up to their responsibilities or expended their energy trying to fulfill the wrong responsibilities. "Dissatisfaction" flattens the moral narrative to an expression of pleasure or displeasure and renders the speaker morally insignificant. The inability to be heard as making moral claims may also have significant implications for how the person views themselves (Carbonell 2019).

The significance of moral communities also provides some insight into why conscientious objection to teaching can be so contentious. Conscientious objection to teaching occurs when teachers refuse to continue to work as educators in a particular context on moral grounds (Santoro 2011a). Such acts rattle the agreed-upon values of a moral community. These moments of reckoning require teachers to ask: What is worth doing? On what grounds? When are the compromises too much to bear for the individual in service to the community? How does the refusal to teach by those whom you hold in high regard impact your conceptions of complicity and obligation?

In her public resignation from Goldsmiths, feminist scholar Sara Ahmed left her position in what could be interpreted as conscientious objection to the institution's failure to sufficiently address the concerns she and others had raised about sexual harassment at the university. In a blog post, she wrote, "I have resigned because the costs of doing this work have been too high" (Ahmed 2016). While Ahmed did not elaborate on what the precise costs were in this post, we can imagine that a commitment to truthfulness, integrity, and justice might have left her exhausted, weary, and embattled. Perhaps conditions rendered her incapable of engaging in what she viewed as the moral rewards of her work. Possibly, she had an experience similar to one recounted by a teacher of color my team and I interviewed who said, "In addition to whatever is problematic, it's more. You have the additional burden of having to convince people that it's actually a problem."

Feminist moral philosopher Lisa Tessman has explained that there are contexts in which the embodiment of virtues comes at a significant cost to the bearer. "Burdened virtues … show that there are virtues whose exercise is, due to bad (including unjust or oppressive) conditions, not conducive to or constitutive of their bearers' flourishing" (Tessman 2005: 111). She describes how the outcomes of burdened virtues can actually change *who* one is: "[T]here is a certain sort of a self that one ought to be, but the unconducive conditions of oppression bar one from cultivating this self" (Tessman 2005: 4). The conditions of oppression cause the problem not the possession of virtues (or values). The latter would be a decidedly cynical view while the former allows for hope in transforming oppressive conditions.

Tessman's work focuses on public liberatory struggles. For many educators, teaching is a political act that entails resistance to oppressive cultural and institutional practices, both within and beyond one's teaching environment. Tessman explains that these costs may be difficult to bear.

> There is a heavy toll on the loyal critic, the political resister who remains situated; in many cases such a resister becomes a sort of outcast even among her/his own people, never fully supported or accepted. Furthermore, communities may be relatively impervious to change even when subjected to internal critique, and to the extent that the objections and protestations delivered by the loyal critic fail to result in significant change, the one who is loyal may still have to endure a community whose practices are oppressive to her/himself.
>
> *(Tessman 2005: 154–155)*

For the resister, like Ahmed, who identifies as a person of color within a predominantly White institution, the costs can be even more profound. While any resister faces the possibility of being rendered an outsider by their internal critique, those who are already considered "strangers" may encounter extraordinary challenges in the face of trying to exercise virtues, live with integrity or do good work. Ahmed argues that "to account for racism is to offer a different account of the world" (Ahmed 2012: 3). Ahmed's existential frustration in attempting to exercise her values might be understood as minor feelings, and these minor feelings could be exacerbated by minimizing their significance by characterizing them as a form of dissatisfaction.

Trying to improve one's community may come at a significant cost, especially when there is a lack of moral recognition. The conditions of implicit bias in a social world shaped by white supremacy make it difficult to determine whether we should call the failure to recognize the moral claims of educators of color moral disqualification (resulting from presumptions about the color of a person's skin and concomitant presumptions of capacity; Darby & Rury 2018) or misrecognition (resulting from the socialization of white supremacy, including the superiority regarding moral claims rooted in culturally-specific locations). An even more insidious form of white supremacy includes a failure to know much about the beliefs and commitments beyond one's own, a luxury not available to those with subordinated identities.

Teachers' values can also present a burden. Black teachers have "described their sense of obligation as a significant source of professional and personal stress, which is only intensified by their acute awareness of their own under-representation in teaching and administration" (Griffin & Tackie 2017). A familiar, and still relevant, example of moral misrecognition is Lisa Delpit's (1986) analysis of her experience as a Black woman teacher trying to convey the value of direct literacy instruction to her White colleagues. Her pedagogical concerns are not solely about the effectiveness or efficiency of pedagogical methods. Delpit raises clear moral concerns about what Black children deserve and indicts White teachers' limited knowledge of their students' cultures.

Yet, Delpit's moral claim cuts even deeper and is amplified by the resounding forms of recognition she received from her moral community, documented in "The Silenced Dialogue" (1988): White teachers are not giving Black teachers the moral recognition they deserve. Delpit's article demonstrates the burden carried by a Black teacher in trying to advocate for the wellbeing of students. We might describe this kind of advocacy as a virtue, perhaps as conscientiousness. Yet, the conditions of the work render engaging in this kind of advocacy potentially detrimental to Delpit. Nonetheless, we might laud Delpit for her steadfastness in speaking up for Black children, even as it comes with substantial costs – she is silenced by White colleagues, has her experience and expertise questioned, and must navigate "bitterness and resentment" in her chosen field (Delpit 1988: 282).

Tessman explains that it is conditions of oppression that render virtues burdened, not the simple fact of possessing virtues. "Normally, Aristotelian virtues are not (self)-sacrificial: quite the opposite, they are sources of well-being for their bearer" (Tessman 2005: 107). Delpit faces several challenges in her attempt to engage in good work. In her professional role, she attempts to do what is best for students and to provide them with the quality of education she believes they deserve. This is her moral commitment to the work. She also strives to be the best version of herself in her role that satisfies her intellectual and creative potential, among others. This is her ethical motivation for the work. In each of these normative aims, she is frustrated.

The more significant burden Delpit bears is attempting to offer an internal critique while her moral claims are misrecognized. A deracialized interpretation of Delpit's experience might portray her inability to transform reading instruction as one that is somewhat universal; teachers' voices and expertise are devalued and their concerns are regularly misrecognized by leaders and policymakers as crudely self-interested. Yet, Delpit's account demands that we address her racialized experience. The dominant paradigm of the good teacher and presumptions of who holds the knowledge of goodness and rightness are bound up with power and race. As a result, Delpit's attempted dialogue with her White colleagues is not only dismissed, but also results in moral misrecognition. Walker (1998) explains, "To fail to seek out and entertain many distinct moral understandings that supply a going social-moral order is to fail to honor people at those many different locations with the status of moral subject" (13–14). Delpit's burden manifests as familiar forms of additional labor: educating her White colleagues in the actual experience and in the writing of the subsequent articles. She likely also takes on the additional emotional labor of moral disqualification.

Delpit recommends White educators sustain pedagogical dialogues with their Black colleagues in order to better recognize their sound and moral reasoning. Her appeal resonates with the key features of Walker's moral theory. Delpit says,

> We must believe that people are rational beings, and therefore always act rationally. We may not understand their rationales, but that in no way militates against the existence of these rationales or reduces our responsibility to attempt to apprehend them … [W]e must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness.
>
> *(Delpit 1988: 297)*

Conditions of oppression place those with burdened virtues in a bind. Delpit demonstrates that advocating for Black students could be an "identity-conferring" commitment for a teacher (see also Labossiere 2019). In Delpit's case, as a Black woman educator, she encountered moral disregard when engaged in the virtue of conscientiousness. Her choice, at this point, is not to stop advocating for Black children in order to engage in self-preservation. Advocating for Black children is a part of what makes this work good and contributes to her moral self-understanding. Tessman shows the moral bind faced by individuals in situations such as this, "While the goal of liberatory struggle may be to make good lives possible, during the actual engagement in struggle one faces a steady stream of moral dilemmas in which there are no good choices" (Tessman 2005: 108).

Delpit's burden cannot be described merely as dissatisfaction, displeasure or the failure to realize preferences. Someone facing this kind of erasure experiences something much more profound and central to the narrative of self, as shown in Walker's account. The kind of advocacy Delpit describes is a practice of responsibility that reveals the person to themselves and others. Yet, when others do not recognize the practices of responsibility, the exercise of those virtues can be described as burdened. This burden is existential.

Conclusion

Moral misrecognition and disqualification are minimized if they are characterized as a form of teacher dissatisfaction. Chicago teacher Dwayne Reed's concerns are not likely the failure to realize pleasure; he is probably experiencing the anguish of someone who does not want to be complicit in inflicting harm on those to whom he is responsible. He may be experiencing the distress of his professional principles being at odds with the expectations of his job. And it is likely that he is experiencing the agony of being a Black man at a time when there are persistent and deadly reminders of the disregard for Black bodies. To label Reed's concerns as burnout is an utter negation of the moral claims he makes. To label Reed's concerns as burnout fails to accord him moral recognition. Similarly, to label Reed's moral concerns as a form of dissatisfaction is a minimization of the depth and reality of his distress.

My research with educators of color has enabled me to better see the prevalence and pain of moral misrecognition and disqualification as features of teacher demoralization. In the past, I had focused on the significance of gender in demoralization. Here, I addressed the racialized aspects of demoralization, especially in a numerically White-dominated profession within a society rooted in white supremacy. This research has led me to realize that demoralization needs to account for inequitable distributions of power in the moral-social order. I have defined demoralization as the "consistent and persistent frustrations in accessing the moral rewards of teaching" (Santoro 2011b: 3). In light of what I have learned, demoralization may also occur when teachers, and/or their students, are disregarded as moral subjects and persons accorded moral legitimacy as a result of social inequities that exist in schools and society.

The failure to experience moral recognition can be a primary source of demoralization. One remedy is to ensure that we cultivate communities with shared values that provide moral recognition. One reading of this recommendation is that it might appear to be advocating the kind of polarization and echo chambers that have characterized the worst of US politics. However, another reading, aligned with my intent, is to view these moral communities as sanctuaries that have the strength to engage in critique about the purposes, practices, and policies of education. What should not be challenged, however, is the moral subjectivity of educators, especially educators of color. By this, I do not mean that they are beyond moral examination, but that they must be taken to be subjects capable of and engaging in moral concerns.

By expanding my epistemological frame of reference, I was able to address the shortcomings of my original characterization of demoralization. This expansion is moral *and* epistemological, because it better captures the conditions faced by educators of color. In so doing, it also provides a simultaneously more precise and inclusive definition of demoralization that may more accurately name the experience of demoralization of educators of color and White educators. The better we become at identifying the challenges faced by teachers, the better we can become at devising responses that support teachers in fulfilling the values that sustain good work.[6]

(Related Chapters: 3, 16, 21, 22, 31, 34.)

Notes

1 The Schools and Staffing Survey, now called the National Teacher and Principal Survey, and the Teacher Follow-Up Survey are published by the National Center for Education Statistics. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/tfs.html

2 There have been positive outcomes from this strategy. Psychologists have built instruments to measure demoralization in individuals and I have participated in the development of large-scale teacher surveys that now include moral and ethical items.

3 My research collaborators are, in alphabetical order, Keith Eric Benson, Julia Hazel, Alberto Morales, Dave Stieber, and Darryl H. Yong. While I could not and would not have done this research without them, this chapter represents my own thinking. I am solely responsible for any errors or failures in the argument.

4 I will be using the terms "educators of color" and "teachers of color" interchangeably. Some of the research cited focuses on particular identities, and I will use the authors' language when that is the case.

5 Dwayne Reed was not interviewed by me or my team.

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