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Ontario Education Research Exchange



Emotional geographies of teaching

What is this research about?

Emotional geographies define the relationships of closeness and distance we have with ourselves, with others and the world around us. It is a new concept in education and social research.

Building on 50 interviews with elementary and secondary school teachers, foundations for five forms of emotional geography and their consequences are formed:

- Socio-cultural
- Moral
- Professional
- Physical and, Political

What did the researchers do?

Fifty interviews were conducted with elementary and secondary school teachers. Each interview lasted for about 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews concentrated on teachers' narratives of critical incidents creating positive and negative emotions in their relations with

What you need to know:

Dr. Andy Hargreaves work focuses on a new concept he calls emotional geographies. Emotional geographies are the relationships of closeness and distance we have with ourselves, with others and with the world around us. Emotional geographies help us understand the conditions that support or impede the development of positive emotional states that avoid excessive closeness or distance between teachers and their students, students' families, and school colleagues and administrators.

students, parents, colleagues and administrators.

What did the researchers find?

Dr. Hargreaves found the following five emotional geographies defined the relationships between teachers and other stakeholders in their work:



- Sociocultural distance
- Moral distance
- Professional distance
- Physical distance
- Political distance

Dr. Hargreaves found that teaching is an essentially unavoidably but not exclusively emotional practice. Emotions enter all teaching by design or by default.

How can you use this research?

These findings could help to advocate for more training in this area for educators. This study may also help administrators understand that if they concentrate only on rational processes of planning or evidence-based improvement, they will overlook or neglect the emotional aspects of teachers' work and undermine teachers' professional engagement.

About the researchers

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Keywords

Emotional Geographies of Teaching, Teachers and Emotions, Relationships and Teaching

About this summary

The Ontario Education Research Exchange (OERE) is a project of the [Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research](#), an Ontario network promoting the use of research in education. The OERE's clear language summaries of academic research aim to support this mandate.

This summary reflects findings from this study *only* and is not necessarily representative of the broader body of literature on this subject. Please consult the original document for complete details about this research. In case of any disagreement, the original document should be understood as authoritative.

This summary has been adapted from the [ResearchSnapshot](#) series developed by [York University](#) and [ResearchImpact](#) and has been developed according to writing and design principles unique to OERE. For more information about this summary or the OERE network please contact oere.knaer.oise@utoronto.ca.

