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As a practicing physiatrist and medical educator, I encountered the limits of traditional medical training models in addressing the complexity and relational nature of patient care. My commitment to compassionate, equity-oriented care led me to explore theoretical frameworks that could better integrate system-level understanding into clinical education. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) offered the analytical and philosophical grounding I was searching for.

My engagement with CHAT began through self-directed study and expanded into a programmatic line of research focused on reflective learning and co-design. Informed by third-generation CHAT, I initiated a series of studies that engaged healthcare professionals (HCPs) across disciplines—including physicians, therapists, and caregivers—in collective analysis of their activity systems. These facilitated CHAT-based reflections revealed deeply embedded contradictions in practice: role ambiguity, communication breakdowns, institutional misalignments, and implicit bias in care delivery.

Through this work, I observed that CHAT is not only a rigorous framework for systemic inquiry but also a powerful *learning intervention* in itself. HCPs participating in our co-designed analyses described a shift in their professional identity and expressed new commitments to collaborative practice, health equity, and systems change. These responses highlight CHAT's capacity to support **transformative agency**—a core goal of my educational scholarship.

Simultaneously, I have used CHAT to analyze my own role and assumptions as a clinician-educator. This reflective practice has deepened my understanding of the tensions between biomedical norms and the humanistic values I aim to uphold in teaching, clinical care, and research. CHAT has supported me to decenter expert authority, foster co-learning with patients and learners, and reimagine what compassionate care means in today's healthcare systems.

My current research applies CHAT within participatory design of compassionate care rubrics, and AI-enabled feedback systems. These projects center reflective, relational practice and draw on CHAT to identify systemic barriers and re-design new approaches. I see this work as contributing to the ongoing evolution of fourth-generation activity theory—one that not only critiques existing structures but supports co-design of more humane, just, and contextually responsive educational ecosystems.

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